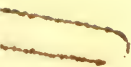






Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation







# A LOVER'S QUARREL:

OR,

## THE COUNTY BALL.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"COUSIN GEOFFREY," "MARRIED FOR LOVE,"

&c. &c.

"The rose we wear upon the heart,  
Should have no thorn to wound us."

SIR E. BULWER LYTTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,  
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,  
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1858.

*The right of Translation is reserved.*



# A LOVER'S QUARREL.

---

## INTRODUCTION.

“THE quarrels of lovers” are, according to the old Latin proverb, “the renewal of love.” This popular but dangerous maxim, which every boy imbibes with his Latin grammar, in the words never quoted but with a smile, “*Amantium iræ, &c. &c.*” he is almost sure to act upon, as soon as he has found some heart, loving enough to be pained by injustice, or piqued by caprice.

Nor is this readiness to follow the seductive

but perilous advice of the classic adage confined to the *unfair sex*. The youngest members of the fair sex itself, hear, even in the nursery, "lovers' quarrels" made very light of—the jest, indeed, of the pretty nursery maids, who yet, perhaps, owe to their readiness to quarrel with their "young man," a courtship full of pain instead of pleasure, final estrangement, and a life-long regret, if not remorse! . . .

We say the maxim, "Lovers' quarrels are the renewal of love," is popular, for all people are prone to quarrel—and none so much so as those who, willing slaves of the master-passion, LOVE, are for the first time aware, that in putting on his yoke they yield themselves also to his attendant spirits, Jealousy, Pride, Vanity, Anger, Grief, Despair, Envy, Revenge, and Remorse!

Wherever Love dwells, these spirits lie in wait to minister to him, and watch eagerly for the first gap in the sweet-briery fence, the first suspicion, the first doubt — above all, THE FIRST QUARREL.

And even in that first quarrel (precursor in general of a system of small dissensions and great miseries), how much is said and done that can never *really* be forgotten, forgiven, or atoned ! . . .

What stinging words will recur in the solitude of a sleepless night ! what scornful looks and angry tones are for ever stamped on the memory of the heart ! . . . How much true pride, and how little true love, may the heart's idol have betrayed under the influence of "the First Quarrel."—"Lovers' Quarrels," so far from being the *renewal* of love, must then, if often repeated, end in its total extinction. They destroy faith ; they bring war where peace should ever dwell ; they wound pride, they outrage affection, they undermine confidence—(confidence in the loved one, confidence in ourselves)—they first rob Love of every charm, and then they slowly murder him.

Whether these lovers are affianced or wedded (for in this happy land there *are* true lovers who,

have been long wedded), let them beware of anything that borders on a quarrel.

“Agree with thine adversary quickly” (and still more with thy dearest one), “whiles thou art in the way with him, lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.”

*The adversary* (in the lover's case) is Self—Self—with all its passionate self-love. “The Judge” is Conscience—that Judge that cannot err, and was never known to spare. The prison is that sunless dungeon, this beautiful and glorious world must ever be to those who find too late that—

“To be wrath with what we love,  
Doth work like madness on the brain.”

And “the uttermost farthing” is all that made life dear; every treasure of tenderness, all the wealth of the heart!

Disraeli has prettily said, "Reconciliation is the feast of love." But we all know what must be the result of constant feasting.

The refutation of the old beguiling adage may be read on many a pale cheek, traced in many a lonely, joyless life, recorded on that saddest of tablets, a broken heart ! The experience of every observer of human life, and its wayward passions, is opposed to the popular maxim.

Tom Moore, in lines that can never die, thus warns lovers of the perils of "a Lover's Quarrel :"

"Oh, ye who have the charge of Love,  
Keep him in silken bondage bound,  
As in the realms of bliss above,  
He sits with roses fettered round.  
Nor ever let him use his wings,  
A minute's, nay, a moment's flight,  
Will rob the plumes of half their light !  
And ruder words will soon rush in,  
To spread the breach that words begin,  
And voices lose the tones that shed  
A tenderness o'er all they said,  
And eyes forget the gentle ray  
They wore in courtship's smiling day ;



And hearts so late united, seem  
 Like broken clouds ; or like the stream,  
 That laughing left the mountain's brow,  
     As tho' its waters ne'er could sever ;  
 Yet ere they reach the plain below,  
     Break into floods, and part for ever !"

PART FOR EVER ! What lonely misery ! what  
 unutterable regret ! what bitterness of desola-  
 tion ! what "late remorse of love" in that  
 common result of a Lover's Quarrel !

Nor is the genius of the sweet Irish poet the  
 only one enlisted against the jeering proverb.  
 One of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton's most touch-  
 ing and eloquent effusions thus refutes this old  
 and popular fallacy :—

"They never loved as thou and I,  
     Who ministered the moral,  
 That aught that deepens love can lie  
     In true love's lightest quarrel.  
 They never knew, in times of fear,  
     *The safety of affection,*  
 Nor sought, when angry fate drew near,  
     Love's altar for protection !

\*            \*            \*            \*

If pain may not from life depart,  
There's pain enough around us,  
*The rose we wear upon the heart*  
*Should have no thorn to wound us !"*

Let it be the care, then, of all (men or women), who in themselves realise that beautiful image of the rose, worn on some true, trusting, loving heart, that there be no thorn to wound the breast that shelters !

And if the following tale, "founded on fact," and truly "drawn from Nature," should convey a timely warning to any young hearts, misled by the old perilous proverb, and eager to risk a quarrel for the dangerous pleasure of "making up"—if such should be led to ponder on the miseries entailed on true hearts by "a Lover's Quarrel," (even though all's well that ends well, to the mere looker-on,) we shall not have written, nor they have read, in vain.

## CHAPTER I.

## THE RED LION, AND FROST'S FAMILY HOTEL.

A BALL, a regular county ball, an assize ball, in short, was about to take place in a town of little importance (except as the scene of our tale) to our readers or to ourselves, but which we will call Oldborough. It was a country town, and bore a strong family likeness to all other country towns. That is to say, there was an extravagant, cold, comfortless hotel, prime new, stuccoed, and called "Frost's Family Hotel."

There was also an old-established, warm, comfortable, cosy inn, very reasonable in its charges, obsequious in its attentions, and proud

of a large, creaking sign, "The Red Lion," which crossed the narrow street, and which Red Lion, represented rampant and frowning, seemed ready to spring upon any customers whom he could not entice from the cold grandeur of "Frost's Family Hotel."

"Frost's Family Hotel" was a large house, a very large house; and it was so square, so formal, and so well proportioned, that you knew your way all over it directly you entered it. "The Red Lion" looked very small outside; but, strange to say, it went back so far, and jutted out in so many directions, that it was in reality larger than "Frost's Family Hotel." It "made up" more beds, employed more waiters and chamber-maids, and kept double the number of post horses (for the railway had not yet quite reached our country town).

Though "Frost's Family Hotel" attracts all new comers, and stands boldly out, as if to defy people to go anywhere else, still the "Red Lion" has an ancient and extensive connexion and old-

fashioned courtesy, extreme cleanliness, a spirit of hospitality, and love of the long-ago, enable the "Red Lion," in spite of its dark and narrow street and its old-fashioned rooms, furniture, ways, and customs, to compete, and, perhaps, something more, with all the modern style, fittings up, and charges of "Frost's Family Hotel."

At "Frost's Family Hotel" you feel at once that you are more than half way in the nineteenth century, in the reign of Steam and Mammon, the days of Reform and of the aristocracy of Wealth and Reality. The rooms are proportioned to the rank (or rather to the purses) of the guests. Those who *can*, and *will* pay for such privileges may sit in large and lofty apartments, with bright grates and tolerable fires. They can gaze on handsome marble mantelpieces and large chimney glasses, against which rest the framed and glazed "rate of charges," so high as to alarm most travellers. There the heartless and sordid announcement, "No fees to servants," stares the waiters in the face, and

drives hope from their eyes and smiles from their lips, sending the while a chill to their manners and secret rage to their breasts. The walls are hung with modish papers, some delicate arabesques of gold and silver, and through the huge window panes of plate glass you can see the world just as it is, "making the cold reality too real." The hangings are of new stiff moreen or damask, spotless, and of light colours, and draped in the last fashion. Polished rosewood tables, chairs, and couches are formally arranged. A French timepiece, and vases of French artificial flowers, adorn the mantelpiece. The light-coloured, handsome carpets are covered with glazed holland, and the chandeliers are arrayed in blouses of the same material. Cold glass handles, affixed to the mahogany doors, admit you to the chill grandeur of the rooms. Such (in suitable degrees) is throughout the style of "Frost's Family Hotel." The charges are very high, but no gratuities allowed to waiter or chambermaid. There is no jolly landlord, who

feels your coming a personal compliment to himself—no landlady who shows her welcome by a gay cap, a bright smile, and a low curtsy. The hotel belongs to a company of gentlemen speculators. Frost is only an agent. Frost has failed in another place close by, in an hotel of his own. He feels little interest in this speculation: his salary does not even depend on its proceeds. Still, as it is a handsome hotel, in a good situation, on a great public road, in a part as yet unreached by rail, but forming a sort of isthmus between two great lines, and above all, as it is a novelty, "Frost's Hotel" prospers. It "takes"—but for "The Red Lion," it would be a brilliant success; but even as it is, it "takes" well enough to form a bitter contrast between the hotel which Frost had started on his own account and this, which he conducts for "The Great Modern Family Hotel, and No Gratuities to Servants Company." Indeed the few bright moments of Frost's dull life are spent in spitefully making out the long bills of some guest



who had never honoured Frost with his patronage on his own former premises. It is a positive pleasure to him to note down three shillings for wax lights to a traveller who has only burnt two Margarita candles for half an hour ! He delights to charge one pound for a state apartment in which an aristocratic stranger unwillingly shivers during a wet afternoon, and six shillings for a fire which hardly burns and blazes cheerfully before the visitor is off. Silent, dignified, cold, but ever ready with a low bow and a respectful negative or affirmative, Frost does the chilling honours of the "Family Hotel."

"Frost's Family Hotel" boasts a very large and handsome room for public meetings, concerts, public dinners, and the "company" expected at the annual balls of the place. But there they are disappointed. The "Red Lion," little as its exterior would lead you to expect it, has a ball-room, not so modern in its elegance, nor so well proportioned, lighted, and appointed, but even loftier and larger than that of its bril-

liant rival. In this ball-room the public balls have been held for at least three hundred years. Here the county belles and beaux of many generations have flirted in the most approved style of their day; and here the love of the "auld lang syne," conquering that of modern innovation, has decided that "the County Balls" shall still be held, to the unspeakable pride and triumph of the landlord and landlady of the "Red Lion." Old Joe Hearty and Dame Hearty, his wife, are as much the antipodes of Mr. Frost as the "Red Lion" is of "Frost's Family Hotel."

They are very old-fashioned, liberal, hospitable, and attentive; they take a warm personal interest in their guests; they know to the minutest detail the history of all the families in the neighbourhood; and as Joe's ancestors (as far, at least, as records go) have always kept the "Red Lion," the histories of past generations of the nobility and gentry around are treasured up by "Old Joe," and related to any traveller who

keeps up the good old custom of asking "Mine Host's" company over a bottle of port, when chancing to be a solitary guest at the "Red Lion."

It is a long time before you can know your way over the "Red Lion"—the passages are so long and so numerous, the upper stories of the house jutting a good way out into the street, and making the entrance somewhat dark. In that shady and arched entrance there is a bar, in which the portly Mrs. Hearty does not disdain to sit, and there is a larder, where hams, cold chickens, game, ripe Stilton and Cheshire cheeses, and dishes of green peas and young potatoes (not boiled) give the hungry traveller some idea of the resources of the "Red Lion."

Old Joe Hearty and his dame were ultra-Tories—Frost was suspected of liberal politics. Old Hearty was somewhat of a *bon vivant*; loved a foaming tankard and a glass or two of hot rum and water, of which, in a common way, his dame would take a few frugal sips—and on

fête days, such as a Royal birth-day, particularly that of the Third George (George the Good), the late Duke of York's and our present Queen's—her wedding day, the 5th of November, and all great Protestant festivals—Old Joe would treat himself to a bottle of crusted port, which he would himself fetch from remote, inner, underground cellars, of which he alone knew the geography, and which, in old black bottles, covered with cobwebs and redolent of the Past, contained a wine which he never dreamt of offering to any but the old nobility or gentry, who could appreciate its rare excellence, and one dozen of which Joe maintained was worth all the port of “Frost's Family Hotel.”

All Old Joe's dependants, waiters, ostlers, postboys, helpers, and even “boots” were votaries of the jolly god; Frost and his underlings were (or professed to be) teetotallers; and yet among the domestics of the “Red Lion” there was more good feeling, honesty, and charity, than at “Frost's Family Hotel.” The “Red

Lion" people always went to church, and all that could read, had bibles and prayer-books. The "Family Hotel" people talked a great deal about freedom of opinion and conscience. Frost was a professed free-thinker. Some of his people went to one "place of worship," as they called it; some to another; and some, like Frost, to none at all.

The "Red Lion" had some very comfortable warm baths, among its odd and rambling premises. Frost's employers had established a "cold-water cure" at the "Family Hotel;" and several patients resided there for the purpose of carrying on this system, under the superintendence of Dr. Renard Chillingham. The host and hostess of the "Red Lion" were very sore and tetchy about Frost and the "Family Hotel." They looked upon Frost as a natural foe—as Old Joe said, a sort of second "Bony" in a small way; but Frost scarcely seemed to know of, or to care for, the existence of the "Red Lion."

## CHAPTER II.

## THE FAULT-FINDER AND HIS FAMILY.

“AND so the ball is to take place at that detestable old inn !” said Lady Coxe, peevishly, to her husband, Sir Thomas Coxe ; “ I really have a great mind not to go. I wonder, Sir Thomas, that you have not had influence to get it held at that very nice hotel—‘ Frost’s Family Hotel’—I am sure that room, where the concerts are given, is the only one in the place fit for a public ball.”

“ My dear,” said Sir Thomas, “ I have done all I can, little as I like the room at the hotel, and quite vain has been my interference ; to attempt

anything more, would be to betray my own powerlessness. A struggle that must end in failure, had better be avoided."

"Well, I have a very great mind not to go," said Lady Coxe, "only I think Eveline would be disappointed; and, besides, I believe as the Countess of Oldborough is in Paris, and Lady Riverton too ill to go, I shall lead off the ball, which I should rather like, if only to spite some I could name."

"Ah! hem! Of course," said Sir Thomas. "Do as you like, my dear, about going. It is a stupid affair, vilely mismanaged—but do as you like."

Sir Thomas spoke almost at random, for he was deep in the "City Article" of "the Times."

"I would not go, except for the triumph of leading off before that odious Mrs. De Vere," said Lady Coxe. "Do you care much about going, Eveline?"

"Care, Mamma!" said Eveline, raising her eyes from her frame, where a gorgeous macaw



and a group of gay flowers seemed to have sprung into existence beneath her needle. "Care! oh, Mamma! of course I care for my first ball, to which I have so long looked forward!" and at the bare possibility of being disappointed, tears rose to her eyes.

"Well, Georgiana is quite indifferent about it; she says so in her letter to-day."

"But yet, Mamma, she is coming home on purpose, and has ordered a most beautiful dress, on which she has spent all her quarter's allowance. Oh, I think she must care a little."

"I asked Georgiana," said Lady Coxe, "as she goes more into society at her aunt's than we do here, and as Major Longbow Miles, my sister's great friend, piques himself on his knowledge of etiquette, whether, as the Countess of Oldborough is in Paris, and Lady Riverton too ill to appear, I am not entitled to take precedence of all the other ladies; and Georgiana assures me I am."

Eveline hesitated. She was very much afraid

of her mother's not going to this ball, and she knew that a trifle would decide her against it (a trifle, at least, in her estimation, but a matter of paramount importance in her mother's); still Eveline was by nature so honest and true, she did not like, by her silence, to consent to what she fancied might be an error, nor to take advantage, for her own convenience, of what she believed to be her mother's ignorance. Blushing deeply, she said, "Mamma, Mrs. De Vere is the granddaughter of an Earl. . . ."

"And what of that?" angrily replied Lady Coxe; "she has no title."

"No; but I think . . ."

"You always think whatever you fancy will annoy me, Eveline; but you happen to think wrong, and I shall just go to this ball for the pleasure of proving to you that I am right, and that you would do well to correct your very unamiable propensity for diminishing the importance of your own mother, and your own family."

“ Oh, Mamma !” said Eveline, with tears in her eyes, “ nothing could be farther . . .”

“ Silence, Eveline !” cried Sir Thomas, raising his eyes from the paper. “ You disturb me—you are always disturbing me—your mother is right and you are wrong ; but, right or wrong, I cannot have these noisy discussions going on for ever.”

“ Noisy, Papa !” said Eveline, sweetly ; “ I have scarcely spoken before this evening, and now quite *sotto voce*. Look, dear Papa, do you like this piece better now ? I have altered the grouping of the flowers,” (and she took her frame to him).

“ Better ! no I think it a great deal worse—a regular failure—and even the great stupid macaw looks ashamed of the whole concern.”

“ And I have taken such pains,” faltered Eveline, “ to alter it as you seemed to wish.”

“ I never wished anything about it,” said Sir Thomas ; “ I hate the whole system of worsted work—girls of the present day spoil their eyes,

ruin their figures, and contract their mind by this gaudy, engrossing, and merely mechanical occupation. I think a handsome rug, or a piece of Brussels carpet outdoes you all."

"Why, Papa, I took to it entirely because you said, how strange it was that other ladies furnished their rooms so elegantly with their fancy works, while *our* drawing-rooms had nothing to boast of, but the common produce of the loom, and the upholsterer's shop. It was entirely to please you, Papa, that I took to worsted work; and now that I have done so much, and that most people say that I am the Miss Linwood of the neighbourhood, I find that you dislike and despise it; and this piece too!" And Eveline despondingly wound up a perfect masterpiece of the work she was famous for, and which, as the composition and colouring were entirely her own, had an artistic merit far beyond that of most productions of the kind. "My own taste," added Eveline, "is more for the pencil and the needle."

"Ah, there's not much to choose between them," said Sir Thomas, "particularly as you young ladies are taught; all your landscapes are out of perspective, all your faces and figures out of drawing. But I cannot waste any more time on the subject now. I have found two glaring faults in Bradshaw, and I am just going to write to the Editor of 'the Times' to shew them up. Give me my writing-case, Eveline."

"Here it is, Papa; shall I unlock it?" As he did not speak, Eveline instantly unlocked the case.

"I did not tell *you* to unlock the case, Eveline; you and your mother hamper all the locks in the house. I daresay, now, you've spoilt *that*."

"I never touch any of the locks, Sir Thomas," said Lady Coxe, looking up from a novel she was reading.

"Nor the keys either," growled Sir Thomas. "It would be better if you did. Things soon go to rack and ruin, when the Mistress of the

House scorns to take any part in its management."

"When I did, you were always finding fault. The steward and the housekeeper are paid for putting up with your horrible temper ; I am not."

"Oh, it's all very fine," said Sir Thomas ; "steward and housekeeper—Ali Baba and the forty thieves—that's what a steward and a whole set of servants under him always reminds me of. Well, I believe it will end in ruin. I shall die in a workhouse, and your dainty Ladyship, too."

"No, I think you will end your days in a lunatic asylum," sneered the lady ; "and unless I take great care, you will drive me into one, too ! However, Nature has blest me with a heavenly temper, and education has, if possible, improved that great domestic treasure ; but one's feelings are exposed to such perpetual wear and tear in living with a regular fault-finder, and one's nerves are so constantly fretted by hearing tones of reproach and complaint, that even I, actually

sometimes, almost lose my self-possession. I agree with that great medical authority, who says, 'Insanity is often only an excess of ill-temper;' if so, *you* will certainly end by going mad; but I never shall, that's one comfort."

"What ink! what pens!" said Sir Thomas, spitefully, seeming not to hear her; "I could get on better with blacking and a stick."

"Try mine, Papa," said Eveline, hastily rising, and running into an inner room to fetch her own little desk.

"Don't run, Eveline, and don't hurry so; it's very vulgar and inelegant!"

"I thought you could not write with that ink, and those pens, Papa; try these, they are very good."

"You are very officious, Eveline. Pshaw! that wretched pale ink and steel pens! I loathe them;" and pushing the desk rudely away, the shining patent steel pens were scattered on the floor.

Eveline meekly began to pick them up.



“Do be quiet, Eveline; they're not worth picking up; besides, you fidget and bother me; wait till I've done, and then let James come and sweep them up.”

“Eveline,” said Lady Coxe, “I want to know who told you that Mrs. De Vere is going to the ball.”

“If you are going to talk about the ball,” said Sir Thomas, “either you or I must leave the room.”

“Well,” said Lady Coxe, “in a general way I should say *you* must, Sir Thomas, as this is the *common* drawing-room, and you are too irritable for the *common* courtesies of life; but I want to consult Eveline about my dress, and so we will leave you to solitude and the spleen.”

“Here are envelopes and wax, Papa.”

“Will you never cease tormenting and interrupting me?” growled Sir Thomas.

“Where *did* you get that spaniel temper of yours, child?” said Lady Coxe, as her daughter accompanied her upstairs, leaving Sir Thomas to

pen a letter of complaint of Bradshaw, to "THE TIMES;" a subject to which his pen lent itself in real and angry earnest, almost making holes in the paper as it hurried along.

"What a horrid person Sir Thomas is to live with," added Lady Coxe.

"Oh, don't say so, dear Mamma."

"Why, I am not sure, that *you*, Eveline, are not even more provoking. Ring for Plume, and reach me that bandbox."

## CHAPTER III.

## THE RUINED FAMILY.

“Oh, Mamma, are you not glad, after all that the Coxes and their party have done to prevent it, the ball is to be at ‘The Red Lion?’ Those dear old Heartys—I hear they are so proud and so pleased; for though they affected to have no fears on the subject, poor Joe turned purple, and dear old Mrs. Hearty pale, whenever it was spoken of, at least so Mabel Primrose says.”

“How can you let Mabel Primrose talk to you, Amy, about such nonsense?—you are much too condescending, my love. She is a pert,

forward girl, and you should keep up your own dignity, or she will be taking liberties."

So spake Mrs. De Vere, who, dressed in a very faded and scanty old silk, and in a cap the blonde of which had been washed again and again, sat in a worn old crimson arm-chair, with gilt frame-work, like some haughty tragedy queen on her throne. Mrs. De Vere, in spite of the disadvantages of her attire, was still beautiful—of a very aristocratic style of beauty too!—pale, with large violet eyes, high forehead, "nose so delicately aquiline," light gold hair, and a form of stately grace. Her daughter Amy was "the softened image of her noble self;" only, that with the same general air of nobility about her, her individual disposition changed all that was commanding in the mother, into all that was winning in the daughter. She was, besides, decidedly *petite*, and though slight, of a form beautifully rounded; and while her mother's complexion, even in her youth, had been of the most Eugenie-like pallor, the rose of June

found a rival on the lovely cheeks of Amy De Vere.

“ Oh, indeed, you wrong Mabel, Mamma,” said Amy ; “ I really think the poorer we grow, the more respectful and humble does she become.”

“ I am glad of it ; I hope one day to be able to reward her. I must go to this ball, I suppose, just to show the Coxes and their *clique* in what real importance consists—but what with trimming my yellow poplin, cleaning my gloves and feathers, washing my lace scarf, re-making my turban, and covering my white satin shoes, I am quite worn out and disgusted with the whole affair. You do not seem to be getting on with your dress, nor Cecilia with hers. You must expect no help from me—I am quite exhausted already.”

“ Oh, Mamma ! with Mabel's clever assistance, our dresses are ready.”

“ And mean and miserable enough they look, I fear,” said Mrs. De Vere.

“Oh, not so bad, Mamma. Shall I fetch them?”

The mother bowed her head over the old plume of feathers she was cleaning.

“My poor girl! is that the best you can make of it?” said the mother, a tear in her proud eye. “Washed muslin, over dyed silks, and not even new gloves and shoes!”

“Oh, but the muslin is so well washed! and the silk so admirably dyed! Then, Mamma, we are to have two beautiful white camellias each, with a bud, and dark glossy leaves, for our hair, from Mabel’s brother, the gardener at Lady Riverton’s; and I have embroidered both our shoes and gloves, so as to hide any little soils there may be on them. I do not say anything about myself, but I am quite sure that Cecilia, even with all these disadvantages, will look much better than Georgiana Coxe, though Mabel says *her* dress (she knows) cost fifty pounds altogether.”

“Mabel again! My Amy, nothing is so vulgar as gossip; but I am sure if Cecile does

eclipse Miss Coxe, you will far outshine your rival *débutante*, Miss Eveline, whom people rave about !”

“ I have no wish to outshine Eveline Coxe, Mamma. When we were playmates, she was the kindest, gentlest, best little creature in the world ; and poor Ferdinand was just like her. Even Miss Crabbe was fond of them. We used to take such long walks with them, and play so happily together, while Miss Crabbe, Miss Peer, and Georgina Coxe talked about their darling London, and the parks and theatres ; and how they hated the country, and detested its dulness.”

“ It was unjustifiable in Miss Crabbe to let you form any such intimacies. Those years, while I was on the continent with your poor father, were years very important to the formation of your manners, characters, and tastes ; and I do not think you will ever be as thoroughly aristocratic a person, Amy, as you would have been, had you never known those *parvenus*.



However, since their impertinence to your father about the shooting, the old people and ourselves are luckily dead-cuts ; and, of course, this being the case, *you* will have very little to do with the young ones."

Amy's eyes filled with tears.

"To think that my daughters should go to a public ball in dresses like those, and both your father and myself can trace our descent from the Conquest ; and once half this county belonged to our ancestors !

"And to think, too," added Mrs. De Vere, as Amy did not reply, "that a Captain Thomas Coxe should ever have presumed to propose to a daughter of ours ! . . . Oh, Amy, I hope such an insult will never be offered us again !"

"Why, Mamma, certainly he is very arrogant, conceited, and consequential, and very unlike Ferdinand ; but I think that, knowing how very poor we are, he fancied he conferred an honour rather than requested one ; and I know that he had great trouble with his parents to get them

to consent to his making the offer at all, and to the very handsome settlements he proposed. I believe people thought Cecile very foolish for refusing him."

"For that piece of intelligence I suppose you are indebted to your friend Mabel's malapert tongue; and the world, Amy, is grown so mean that, knowing we *are* a ruined family, it would think you did wrong (had you the option) to refuse to link the houses of De Vere and Lorraine with Mr. Frost, of the Family Hotel!"

Amy laughed, but her mother drew up with extra importance.

"And now go and call Cecile to tea. She has been walking with Dudley Harcourt for the last three hours, up and down the terrace and avenue, much too long, considering the time that must elapse before the marriage can take place. 'Familiarity breeds contempt.' Dudley is less deferential to me, and less devoted to her, since she has been so lavish of her company."

"Oh, Mamma! indeed that is fancy."

“Allow me to judge of that, Amy. Go and call your sister and Dudley ; and ask your Papa if he will come down or not.”

The lovers reluctantly obeyed the summons. It was such luxury to them to pace, now arm in arm, now hand in hand, up and down the moss-grown terraces, and the ill-kept but noble avenue of “The Court,” for such the old place had been called ever since some King of the olden time had, while visiting his loving subject, Sir Roland De Vere, on the news of some imaginary treason, summoned a hasty council in that old Manor Hall.

Once upon a time, all the county, as far as eye could reach—with its beautiful woods and sparkling river, its rich corn-fields and its emerald pastures—belonged to the De Vere of that day. But the decline of this family had been as gradual and certain as the rise and prosperity of some others in the neighbourhood. The father of the present possessor (addicted to gambling and drinking) contrived, when his son, a gay

young officer, was of age, with his consent, to cut off the entail of all the largest of the farms, and to mortgage them deeply ; and the present Mr. De Vere, proud, reserved, and eccentric, to such an extent as by many to be considered insane, possessed nothing but the large dilapidated old mansion, its romantic grounds, and a home-farm, which, well managed, might have realized five hundred a-year at least ; but as it was let to a very poor and lazy tenant, it scarcely produced an annual three hundred.

Common sense and common prudence would, of course, have suggested the dismissal of a supine old tenant, bigotted to a past and exploded system of farming, in these days of great agricultural improvement, and of the justly-boasted application of science to matter. But "old Giles" was the last of a race who had rented under the De Veres in their palmy days. To old Giles the De Veres were still the great people of the place. "The Court" was still to old Giles "The Manor Hall," De Vere "The

Squire," and "Lord of the Manor"—a barren title, it is true, but one he held, and must hold, come what would. And this made him, in old Giles's eyes, a far more important person than the rich Sir Thomas Coxe, who had bought, by degrees, all the broad lands (the home farm excepted) which once belonged to the De Veres.

Poor Roland De Vere, the present proprietor of De Vere Court, in his youth a very gay and gallant officer, had been expected to bestow his very handsome person, and very ancient name, on some City heiress, or wealthy widow, who would have enabled him to buy back the old possessions of the De Veres; but, alas! "Love will still be lord of all." An ardent passion for the penniless daughter of the Hon. Captain Lorraine, youngest son of the late Earl of Rock-alpine, ended in his marrying the haughty beauty; and his regiment soon after being put upon half-pay, he retired with her to De Vere Court, where they realized the old proverb—"Marry in haste and repent at leisure." Two

daughters inherited the pride, the poverty, and the remarkable beauty of both their parents.

Noble as was their descent, even the present Earl of Rockalpine, Mrs. De Vere's uncle, was himself a very poor peer, who lived abroad, took no part in politics, and had little or no influence. His title descended to heirs general. He had an eccentric brother, older than Captain Lorraine, Mrs. De Vere's father ; and the present Earl had never noticed his niece, Mrs. De Vere, since her marriage ; for his bosom friend, old Lord Bagshot, had coveted the fair hand of Cecilia Lorraine—that hand which, in spite of her uncle's influence and her elderly wooer's wealth and title, she persisted in bestowing upon the ruined descendant of the house of De Vere.

The young couple, instead of boldly confronting the fate they had brought upon themselves (*to please themselves*), and so using the present as to control the future, sat down to mourn and brood over the past. A contemptuous enmity for, and a disparaging jealousy of, all their

wealthier neighbours, filled their hearts, and enervating retrospects of former grandeur, early unfitted these ill-fated people for that economy and good management which, it appeared, alone could enable them to regain that position which was their birthright.

Quarrelsome and ill-matched in all other things, the aristocratic parents were united in this:—From the peerage in which, as far as records went, the houses of De Vere and Lorraine were blent with every noble family on record, the little heirs of pride and poverty learned to read. To church the De Veres went; but, alas! not to learn humility, but to pamper pride.

The grand pew of the church belonged to the De Veres—monuments of the De Veres covered its walls—a Sir Roland De Vere was its founder—and the effigy of “a goode knight, Conrad De Vere, with Dame Bertha De Vere, his wife, and six brave sonnes and seven fayr daughters,” carved in stone, formed one of the lions of the



church—the goode knyghte and his dame lying side by side, and the six sonnes praying on their right, and the seven daughters on their left, all exactly alike in face, form, and attitude. Brasses, too, in great numbers and admirable preservation (all connected with the De Veres), delighted the curious; and this, too, in the house of God, the place, of all others, where man should feel what a worm he is!

In their large, unalienable pew—surrounded by monuments of their past grandeur, and gazing on painted windows, emblazoned with their arms—the De Veres almost transported themselves back to the olden time—felt their hearts swell with pride, and looked down with ineffable scorn on Sir Thomas and Lady Coxe, who, in order to obtain what they thought tolerable accommodation, had been obliged to throw several pews in the body of the church into one, and, by dint of gilt rods, red silk curtains, brass nails, scarlet cloth linings, down cushions, swelling hassocks, and a patent stove, had made their pew as evi-

dently the vain, lounging, and godless retreat of the purse-proud *parvenu*, as the De Veres' was the faded temple of family pride and haughty poverty.

And when the sun looked in upon that house of God, and lighted up the forms of the Coxe family, so vain of their new grandeur, and the De Veres, so proud of their past glories—what a mockery must those kneeling families have appeared to Him who knows the heart, and who remembers that we are but dust!

How hollow, in the ear of Omniscience, the loud confession of Sir Thomas Coxe that he was a “miserable sinner,” meant to edify the wondering poor!—how vain the haughty “Have mercy upon us, O Lord!” of Roland De Vere! What blessing could either parent hope to bring down by such mere lip-homage on the fair young families kneeling around them!

## CHAPTER IV.

## LE DEPÊT AMOUREUX.

It was with the gentlest deference that Dudley Harcourt listened to Mrs. De Vere's rebuke for his own want of punctuality, and for inducing Miss De Vere (as she pointedly called her daughter) also to forget her mother's appointed hour for tea.

No one who heard his courteous and amiable apologies, or beheld the fond and admiring gaze with which he deprecated the rising wrath of his beautiful affianced, would have believed Mrs. De Vere's assertion regarding the diminution of

his respect for her, and the falling off in his devotion to her daughter.

“Mamma!” at length exclaimed Cecile, her dark eyes flashing through their tears, her colour rising, and her bosom heaving, “Mamma! pray address your reproaches to me, and to me alone. Dudley more than once reminded me that it was time to go in; but the evening was so lovely, and I was so tired with the ungrateful task of making an old dress look new, that I really thought myself privileged to enjoy an extra half hour of peace and fresh air.”

“Whatever privileges *you*, Miss De Vere, may assume, we can discuss in private, if you please; but Mr. Dudley Harcourt is my guest, and, therefore, I must request him to pay *mé* in future the common courtesy of attending to the hours of my establishment.”

“Be sure I will never transgress again,” said Dudley, rising in the most affectionate manner, and attempting to take the reluctant hand of his future mother-in-law.

“Oh Dudley,” said Cecile, “how *can* you so demean yourself! The more you try to conciliate Mamma, the more she will scorn and mortify you!” and Cecile handed him his tea with the air of an offended Juno.

“Not so, indeed, my dear, dear Dudley,” said Mrs. De Vere, pressing his long-proffered hand, while tears filled her eyes. “Cecile wrongs me, my dear young friend; contempt of my wishes, and disregard of my rules, arouse all my pride and anger, but concessions and forbearance touch me to the heart.”

And Mrs. De Vere threw her arm round the neck of her daughter's lover, who, extending his hand to Cecile, gently drew her into an embrace that included the three. Peace being thus restored, Dudley Harcourt produced a casket and a small parcel.

The parcel contained three pairs of white kid gloves, elegantly trimmed and embroidered—the casket a set of pearls, very tasteful, but not very expensive.

“Now, dearest Mamma—elect!” he said, “let me avail myself of this happy moment to make my offerings. These,” and he presented the gloves, “for your fair self and lovely daughters to wear at ‘the ball,’ and the contents of this poor casket my first love-gift to my future bride.”

“Dudley,” said Mrs. De Vere, kindly, but firmly, “you know me too well to be offended at my refusing what I know is so kindly meant. With regard to the pearls, Cecile herself can tell you, that when I yielded to her prayers and yours, to permit of an engagement, I exacted a promise that no presents should ever be accepted by her, until she became your bride; and with regard to the gloves, I long ago gave my word to Mr. De Vere, that neither my daughters nor myself would ever accept of any gift, however trifling, from any gentleman not related to himself or me. We have many reasons for this, my dear Dudley, which I have not time to explain—nor you, perhaps, to listen to. Keep the pearls till

you can decorate your bride with them; the gloves will be very useful to Mrs. Dudley Harcourt some day, I doubt not. And now I am going to sit with your father," she added, looking at an antique clock on the mantel-piece. "One hour is all I can allow you, and then dear Dudley must go home with a good grace." Mrs. De Vere then, smilingly, left the room.



## CHAPTER V.

## THE FIRST QUARREL.

“How very provoking, and how very absurd so to reject your kind, beautiful offerings, dearest Dudley!” said Cecile, a tear falling on the hand with which her lover grasped her own.

“No, Cecile! do not speak thus of what a mother has said or done. Do not, my sweet one! I know, my darling! it is for me, and my mortification and disappointment, you feel; but do not, dearest, allow even that generous impulse to betray you into any disrespect to your mother.”

“Oh, if *you* are satisfied, Mr. Harcourt,”

said Cecile, hastily withdrawing her hand; the bewitching softness of her look and manner changed for scorn and anger, "*I* am sure *I* have no reason to complain. Indeed, I dare say, Mamma is quite right. Ladies cannot be too reserved — the less one condescends the more one is respected!" and Cecile took up her guitar, which lay on a chair close by, and with an air of haughty *insouciance*, began to play a waltz.

"Cecile!" said her lover, very pale and much hurt, "what do you mean by your last remark?"

"Mean?" retorted the offended beauty, with assumed surprise; "surely, Mr. Harcourt, so distinguished a scholar, so great a moralist, and so capital a lecturer, does not require me to explain so very simple a remark."

"Yes, Miss De Vere, I do," said Dudley, meeting her saucy and provoking glances with a sorrowful, but proud composure.

"Oh dear! I am not to be awed by grand theatrical stares," said the young lady; who, however, was evidently a good deal awed. "One

would think I was a child, Mr. Harcourt, by the way in which you presume to school—nay, to scold me.”

“What have I said, Cecile, to cause this sudden change from the most beguiling and endearing tenderness, to the most insulting defiance and contempt?”

“Oh, pause! your vanity misleads you sadly, Mr. Harcourt; I cannot indeed plead guilty to the tenderness you presume to tax me with, whatever I may do to the defiance and contempt.”

“Sister! dear sister!” said Amy, who had remained silent till then, her head bent over her work, and who, on looking up, perceived that Dudley was pale, trembling, and his eyes full of tears, though his manner was collected, and even stern. “Sister!” and Amy rose, and approached the stately Cecile, who was tossing back her long ringlets with one hand, while with the other she carelessly touched the lute. “Be advised, dearest sister. You are not yourself to-night. You are very angry and with very little, if any,

cause. Come, shake hands with dear Dudley—he meant nothing unkind; come, besides being one whom you mean one day to ‘love, honour and obey,’ he is even now our pastor—our adviser. It is his duty to tell us of our faults. Come, make up this silly quarrel before you say things you would give the world you had never said.”

Cecile glanced for half an instant at Dudley. She expected to see him eagerly advancing, passionately courting a reconciliation—but though he loved her with a first, intense and ardent love, he had been offended by her contemptuous and disrespectful asperity—shocked by her bitterness, and grieved at what seemed to him to betray so unchristian a spirit. Meekness and penitence alone could have brought him at that moment to her side—perhaps to her feet. There was nothing meek or penitent in the glance Cecile threw upon him, but there was something excessively haughty and defiant in what that glance became, when she saw him sternly gazing on her, with his arms folded on his bosom.

"Amy!" she said, "your spirit partakes a great deal more of our fallen fortunes than of our lofty birth. Let this be a lesson to you, my sister, and if ever you condescend, as I did, and lavish attentions on one every way unworthy of them, expect to be lectured like a school-girl, and taunted with your tenderness."

"Oh, sister! do not let your proud temper blind you so; indeed, Dudley said nothing but . . ."

"But what he would repeat under similar circumstances," said her lover, ghastly pale, but with flashing eyes and sternest brow.

"Which circumstances will never occur again!" said Cecile, laughing bitterly in her passionate scorn. "To expose one's self to insult once, shows little of either proper pride or discernment; but to do so again, would be, indeed, to have no penetration or self-respect."

"You are right, Miss De Vere!" said Dudley, in a voice so choked by contending emotions, it made Cecile's heart stand still. He moved to

reach his hat. She grew pale, and felt sick and faint; for though she would not look up from a brooch she was settling in her bosom, she felt that he was going.

“Farewell, Miss De Vere!—Amy, farewell, and God bless you!”

He has taken his hat—he has left the room—Cecile sinks back, pale and motionless. Amy rushes after him—he has passed out at the hall door—he is on the moonlit terrace. He raises to his lips the hand she placed on his arm, in the hope of detaining him, but he persists in his departure, and, on that hand, Amy felt the hot and bitter tears fall!

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE RIVAL SOLICITORS.

THERE were two solicitors in our county-town : one was a gentleman in spite, the other in right, of his being an attorney-at-law. The great difference in the rank, and social position, and importance of these two members of the same profession, was *not* owing to any accident of birth, or caprice of Dame Fortune—they were both born of parents belonging to the working classes. Mr. Ormsby's father had been a tenant-farmer, Mr. Stubbs's a draper, or rather, general dealer ; they had been educated at the same grammar school, and articed to the same old-



established firm of Wily, Smiley, and Co. When Wily died, and old Smiley retired to live on an estate, and in a Hall, which had belonged to one of the principal clients of the firm, who was outlawed, and living in great penury at Calais—Stubbs, the general dealer, grown immensely rich, purchased the business for his son; and Ormsby's father would have bought his son a share in it too, but that, in spite of their long intimacy, the young men had no sympathy with each other; and the companionship, which had been endured, if not welcomed, in the first flush and undistinguishing love of fellowship, of early youth, had become odious to Gerald Ormsby, and rather wearisome to Sam Stubbs. Mr. Ormsby, therefore, accepted the stewardship of a nobleman's estate, *pro tempore*, and quitted his native place for Wales; but giving his old school-fellow fully to understand that, in all probability, he should be a dangerous rival yet at Oldborough, and advising him to make the most of his time. At the period of our story,

Mr. Samuel Stubbs was become Mr. Stubbs, for the good old general dealer was lying under a showy white tombstone, and a most laudatory epitaph, in the parish church of Oldborough.

Mr. Stubbs then had lost his thick, straight, sandy hair and slender waist. He was grown bald, corpulent, very testy, and very rich. He had married Miss Smiley, who brought him twenty thousand pounds, and half-a-dozen children, all flat-nosed, sandy, thick-lipped, vain, sly, and grasping—from the eldest son, “Smiley Stubbs,” the pride of his mother’s heart, and the terror of his father’s, who aimed at being, and would have been the *fastest* young man in Oldborough, only that it is “money makes the mare to go;” and though he had plenty of it, he did not like parting with it. Some who had much less of what they all—alas!—considered the one thing needful, beat him in the unprofitable race. Smiley Stubbs, who knew nothing of law, was a lawyer for all that, and a partner

in the firm, with a very handsome share of the profits.

Old Stubbs was a very shrewd old attorney indeed. He was a pettifogger, but a very clever one—full of “*dodges*,” tricks, windings and turnings, obsolete laws, and forgotten, unrepealed acts. He had got many an innocent man imprisoned, and many a guilty one off. He had saved more than one life by a mere quirk and quibble; and his satisfaction arose not so much from the gratitude of the client, or the luxury of conscious benevolence, as from the exultation he felt in what he called his “cuteness.”

Yet, with all his cleverness, all his wealth, even in the worldly race Gerald Ormsby had beaten him. He was originally no more a gentleman than Sam Stubbs; but, as Claude Melnotte says, “honest men are the gentlemen of nature”—and he was a thoroughly-honest man. The nobleman who had entrusted to him the agency of his immense estates, soon found, by the improved state of his affairs, what it was to have

an agent whose object was rather to benefit his employer than to enrich himself. He conceived an affection for the earnest, upright, noble-hearted young solicitor, who dared to tell him the truth, to point out even a *patron's* error, to plead the cause of an offending tenant, and act, in spite of a great name, as if he had ever the fear of one greater far before his eyes.

The Earl of Olborough invited Gerald Ormsby to his table, preferred shooting or fishing *tête-à-tête* with him, to joining parties of men of his own rank ; encouraged him to cultivate his naturally-fine mind, gave him access to his choice library, welcomed him to his house in town, his opera-box, his dinner parties, and took him with him to Italy to see his Lordship's only sister, the once-beautiful Lady Almeria Staunton, who had married against her brother's advice, and without his consent, Sir Harry Hazlewood, the handsomest, most sporting young fellow on the turf. Sir Harry had been obliged, ere long, to live abroad, his affairs being (as it was said) incurably and inextricably involved.

Both the Earl and Sir Harry had had dealings with the firm of "Stubbs and Son"—the former never to any great extent—the latter had grown poor in proportion as the Stubbs's grew rich ; and but for the timely intervention of the Earl, and Gerard Ormsby's talent and integrity, Hazlewood itself would probably, in time, have passed into the hands of "Lawyer Stubbs," as "the Poor" called him, in a whisper, turning pale the while.

The once beautiful Lady Almeria was beautiful no more ; she was in the last stage of a consumption, but her charms had been inherited by a daughter—at the time of the Earl's and Mr. Ormsby's visit, about eighteen. Sir Harry himself was grown stout, rubicund, dull, and domestic—very anxious about his wife and his affairs. The Earl encouraged him to lay them, as far as he could, before the young lawyer, Gerald Ormsby. He made himself master of them by degrees, and did not consider them hopeless. For several years (at the Earl's en-

treaty) Gerald Ormsby, acting as agent and legal adviser for Sir Harry Hazlewood, visited that gentleman wherever he and his family happened to be located on the continent, and attended the interment, in the Protestant burial-ground at Leghorn, of the Earl's once beautiful sister, Lady Almeria. Sir Harry, who, proud and shy, shrank, in his altered fortunes and anxious position, from the gay English abroad, clung to Gerald Ormsby almost as to a son; and implored him not to leave himself and his little Merrry, as he called his daughter, alone, in the first intolerable anguish of their bereavement.

Almeria at this time was two-and-twenty, Gerald six years older. She was very lovely, confiding, and impassioned. Gerald was the only young man her father liked or encouraged. She had herself a great distaste for foreigners and for continentalised English. She probably suspected no danger. Gerald was wiser. His incessant and judicious exertions had put Sir Harry's affairs in a very different and highly

improved state. Already his income was trebled, while the estate itself was paying off its heavy incumbrances. Gerald one day announced to Sir Harry, that at the end of two years, he thought he might venture to return to Hazlewood and resume the life, not of a modern sporting man, but

“Of a fine old English gentleman,  
All of the olden time.”

When poor Sir Harry, whose nerves were once of iron, and his heart apparently of granite, heard this good news, he burst into tears, held out his hand to Gerald Ormsby, and said, “Thank him, Merry ; for it will be owing to him that I shall, perhaps, one day, see you sitting, as your ancestors did, among the noble matronage of England. Lord Loftus and myself always planned a marriage, Gerald, between his boy and my girl ; but even had he resumed the proposal, she should never have entered that haughty family, except as (what through you she will



again become) the heiress of Hazlewood. Now I think I may refresh my old friend's memory on that point, eh, Merry?" but Merry, pale as the white dress she wore, had turned to the window, to hide her tears, and Gerald had hastily risen and quitted the room.

That artless speech of the old man's had fully aroused Gerald Ormsby to the danger of his fascinating intimacy with Almeria Hazlewood. His patron's niece, his unsuspecting friend's daughter, child of the very man who was of all men most sacred in his eyes, because the great good he, Gerald, had done him, would make it ingratitude to reproach and impossible to condemn him.

But honour had been Gerald Ormsby's guide through life. He read at a glance, in Almeria's sudden, deadly pallor and starting tears, the delicious, dangerous secret of her heart. He denied himself the luxury of a farewell—he exposed himself to the misery of being thought by her abrupt, capricious, indifferent—he knew,

if he saw her, his heart *would* speak out—and he departed.

But Almeria loved him as a woman of two-and-twenty, who has never frittered away her powers of loving in little flirtations, and who thoroughly respects and reveres the man she prefers, is sure to love. Delicate, sensitive, and, perhaps, predisposed a little to her mother's malady, a secret grief and bitter mortification (for in his flight she read the conviction that he perceived her passion and did not return it), this soon robbed Almeria's eyes of their light, her form of its roundness, and her cheek of its bloom. Sir Harry was first in terror, then in despair. He sent for Gerald—Gerald did not dare obey the summons. Almeria grew rapidly worse. She was confined to her bed. She believed herself dying. She, under that impression, told her tale of love and misery to her father. His pride revolted, his tenderness prevailed. He never admitted a doubt that Gerald's conduct was dictated by honour, not by indif-

ference. He, Sir Harry, laid the case before the Earl. The Earl, who had noticed with anxiety Gerald's pale cheek, anxious brow, and deep depression, soon got at his secret, and wrote to Sir Harry.

“He loves Almeria, that is certain; that he would die rather than do by us what he thinks dishonourable, is equally true. Loftus's son is heir to a barony and ten thousand a year; handsome, elegant, and not worse than others of his *clique*—but it is a *clique* fond of gambling, devoted to ‘*ballerinas*’—hollow, artificial ‘used up.’ He will not love Almeria, but he will marry her for the sake of Hazlewood and a nurse.—at present he has a *liaison* which quite engrosses him. Gerald adores her. She, as you know, lives but for him, he is a good, noble, devoted fellow. I will take care he rises in the world—write, and press on the match before Almeria slips through your fingers and lies by her mother's side.”

Sir Harry did as the Earl directed. Gerald, half wild with love and joy, hurried to Leghorn.

Sir Harry himself led him to Almeria's arm-chair and left him with her.

Happiness is a great restorer, particularly to the young—Almeria soon rallied. She became Gerald Ormsby's wife and returned with him and her father to Hazlewood, within twenty miles of Oldborough. His marriage connected him with the county families, and ensured his cordial reception among them. But although Hazlewood would one day be his in right of his wife, he would not eat the bread of idleness or drink the cup of dependence.

“Shame on the coward thought that e'er betrayed  
The noon of manhood to the myrtle shade.”

He did not resign the stewardship of the Earl's estates. Indeed, his doing so would have seriously injured his generous patron; but he had got everything in such order that a little attention on his part, and an honest, clever steward kept all going, without any drudgery of his. Sir Harry was able to live in good style at Hazlewood; but to do so economy was necessary.

Had Sir Harry had to provide an income for the young couple, he must have diminished his establishment and curtailed his own enjoyments. It was Ormsby's pride, himself, and by his own exertions, to surround his wife with luxuries and elegancies generally grudged or withheld. He resumed his profession—took offices in Old-borough—clients flocked round the “honest lawyer,” as he was called—and with the profits of his profession, and the income he enjoyed as the Earl's agent, Gerald was almost rich. Honesty was thus openly opposed to Chicane, and often carried the day. Envy of Gerald Ormsby's success, his position in the county, his marriage and connexions, was the gnawing familiar demon of the Stubbs family. Old Stubbs, in spite of his wealth and success, was of course visited by nobody, or rather only by nobodies—while Gerald Ormsby, in spite of his profession, was a county man, and probably would one day be a county member.

He always smiled, shook hands, and spoke

cordially to Stubbs senior ; but of course he did not expect his elegant, thorough-bred Almeria to visit the overdressed, aspiring, impertinent females of the Stubbs family. They had called at Hazlewood, and Mrs. Ormsby had left her cards at the large red brick mansion of Mr. Stubbs ; but there the intercourse ended. Gerald Ormsby had resolved it should, and nothing Mr. Stubbs could do, availed against that resolve.

Old Stubbs felt this most bitterly, and railed against Gerald Ormsby, as if the success of the latter were a deadly and personal injury to himself ; but such feelings are hereditary, and the venom of all the Stubbs family against Mr. and Mrs. Ormsby was undisguised.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE STUBBS FAMILY.

THE Stubbs family inhabited their dining-room—they had elegant drawing-rooms for show—but they never felt at home in them, and consequently no one else did. When they were thrown open, they had that cold, damp, close smell, and stiff, formal air, common to show rooms among little people. The show rooms of the 'vulgar,' and the state apartments of the great, have nothing in common.

The Stubbs family were at tea—a very important meal with them, for they dined early. Old Stubbs never could accustom himself to late



dinners. Mrs. Stubbs, who in her heart preferred dining at the hour she had always been used to, tried to account for what she considered unfashionable, by professing herself an invalid, and Smiley Stubbs and his sisters railed and lamented in vain.

Dinner was always on the table at one, and tea at six. Not, tea according to your notion, dear reader ! with your fragment of toast or scroll of thin French roll and butter ! The Stubbs's tea was a repast as substantial as most dinners. The massive silver teapot, (with the two S.S. intertwined by way of crest, in honour of the houses of Smiley and Stubbs,) contained an abundant supply of Twinings' best souchong ; a portly dame, was flanked by her stately companion full of fragrant mocha.

The corresponding basin and ewer were filled with "sparkling lump" and richest cream, and no epicure in tea-drinking could have complained of any part of what the Minerva press used to call the "tea equipage." But the new-laid eggs, the

broiled ham, the chicken, tongue, game or pigeon pies, buttered toast, tea-cakes, muffins and crumpets, honeycomb, and preserves of every variety, united to make something far beyond what the Swiss call "*un thé complet*," and was a repast to which in reality, the junior members of the Stubbs family looked forward as eagerly as did their parents.

The Ball was the all-engrossing topic, and exultation in their own handsome dresses, wreaths, gloves and bouquets, was heightened by ill-natured *on dits* and prognostics about the wretched contrivances, and poverty-stricken turnout of the proud De Veres.

Next to the Ormsbys, the De Veres were the objects of the spite and witless sarcasms of these vulgarians ; for, strange to say, Smiley Stubbs had fallen desperately in love with Cecile De Vere. They had met in early days at a dancing-school, and to the delight of Master Smiley Stubbs, and the annoyance of the even then stately and aristocratic little girl, had, on account

of their similar height, been ordained by Mons. Le Zephyr to figure together in several show dances. It was during the absence of the parental De Veres on the continent, and while a governess supplied the mother's place, that Mons. Le Zephyr's "Académie" (a temporary affair) was honoured by the Misses De Vere.

The fact was, Miss Crabbe had boldly included a fashionable style of dancing in the list of accomplishments she professed to impart. Like Meadows in the farce, who thought he could read, because he had never tried, she fancied she could teach dancing because she had never tried—and, indeed, had never known any but the old Scotch and Irish steps, once in vogue, and which her mother had taught her. It was then a great shock to her to find, by Mrs. De Vere's letters from the South of France, that she attached great importance to her daughters becoming proficient, in the modern style of French dancing.

Miss Crabbe was, however, "*une femme a*

*ressources* ;” she pretended a violent attack of rheumatism in her legs, and, unauthorized by Mrs. De Vere, she took her pupils regularly to the *class* formed by Mons. Le Zephyr, and attended by many of the county families, and some of the towns-people’s children.

Mons. Le Zephyr of course knew nothing of the prejudices and *esprit de corps* of his different pupils.

Master Stubbs was dressed to perfection, and had a great talent for dancing. He was just half a head taller than Cecile De Vere. She was Mons. Le Zephyr’s most promising *danseuse*. And M. Le Zephy was as great an autocrat as the Czar, and as determined as Napoleon First or Third.

Master Stubbs was so essentially mean and vulgar, that the scorn, hauteur, and even contempt of the lovely little Cecile De Vere only added to the admiration her beauty and grace inspired.

Long after the *Académie* had ceased to exist,

and Mons. Le Zephyr had returned to live in his *cinquième* at Paris, on the fruits of his success among *Les Anglais—si bêtes—si maladroits*, Master Stubbs used to presume on that dancing-school introduction, to bow to Cecile De Vere whenever he could catch her cold and haughty eye. An innate good breeding compelled the reluctant and disdainful bend she would gladly have withheld altogether, and little did she imagine, as her lip curled at the gorgeous vulgarity of Smiley Stubbs' "get up" and "turn out," that it was a passion for her proud, inaccessible self, that had opened the purse of one, in whom Avarice would have mastered Vanity, (perhaps) had not Love, the master passion for a time, even of a pettifogger, insisted on an amount of outlay necessary to make Smiley Stubbs' toilet and equipage the delight of his own eyes and heart, and of those of all the vulgar belles of Oldborough, and as he vainly hoped of that proud, beautiful "tip-topper," as he called Cecile De Vere.

Once a year, a costly, but most vulgar and amorous Valentine shocked her eyes and offended the taste of the De Veres ; but as there was no intimation from whom the fat pink cupids, ruby hearts, and spangled darts came, they were consigned to the flames as soon as glanced at.

On some occasions, and always when the service was half over, Smiley Stubbs's vulgar, showy "trap" would drive up to the venerable churchyard of De Vere Court ; and in strange contrast with its vermilion shafts and wheels, and the knowing cockney look of Smiley Stubbs, his horses and tiger, were the mouldering monuments, dark massive yew trees, and time-stained gothic church itself.

Then would Smiley Stubbs enter the quiet church ; cropped, scented, moustachio ; dressed in the extreme of the fashion, with the glossiest and blackest of hats, whitest of buckskin gloves, choicest of whips, with an eye-glass and a vinaigrette in its handle ; a massive chain,



a watch about the size of a florin, and a bunch of charms a Bloomsbury dandizette might have envied him, perched up on very high heels, and colouring to the roots of his sandy hair, in spite of the assumed nonchalance of his manner.

He would ostentatiously bestow half-a-crown on the old gravedigger who officiated as pew-opener, for placing him in a seat commanding a view of the grand old family pew of the De Veres, and the stately beauty this vulgar, sordid wretch had yet the taste to idolize, and who, with changeful cheek and eyes often moistened by tears, was listening with rapt attention to the deep, melancholy tones of her heart's idol, Dudley Harcourt, whom, with the quick instinct of jealousy, Smiley Stubbs already hated, and designated as that "prig of a parson," but yet owned, in his inmost heart, to be a "cut above him," and "no end of bird."

If Smiley Stubbs completely failed in obtaining one glance of recognition from his "superb idol," he made, *en revanche*, sad havoc among



the humbler hearts at that little country church, and for the one guinea Valentine he sent through the De Vere Post Office, some dozen of humbler pretensions, but not less ardent professions, passed through that same Post Office, and were duly delivered at the red brick mansion of "Stubbs and Son."

After all, vulgar, odious, and sordid as Smiley Stubbs certainly was, there was something almost respectable in the constancy and incurable devotion of his heart. We will not say that it was exactly Love without Hope, because there is no knowing what hope might have lurked in the breast of the purse-proud coxcomb, who knew that the De Veres were yearly growing poorer and poorer, and himself and family richer and richer.

"When the old bird 'drops,' " he would say to his favourite sister Jemima, "the mortgagees will seize all—the girls won't have a hole to put their heads in, nor the proud old mother either; then'll be my chance, Jenny. I'll get Oliver

Bathos, who wrote that novel you are so fond of, the 'Poetry of Passion,' to write me a letter of condolence, and wind up with the offer of my hand and heart to Cecile, and a home for Amy and the mother. He shall tip 'em a bit of the heroic and sentimental, and I'll tip him a five pound note, more than he got by his 'Poetry of Passion.' "

"Oh, I don't know that," said Jemima, spitefully ; "he got board and lodging for three months through that production."

"How so, Jem?"

"Why, his publisher threw him into prison for three months for expenses, and he'd be there now, only seeing he never could pay, he was advised to go through the Insolvent Debtors' Court, and is whitewashed."

"Well, he'll jump at five pounds for any amount of love letters I want of him."

"Of course he will, poor scribbler ! and I hope it will answer, Smiley. I should dearly like to be able to pay back to those haughty De

Veres some of the slights and airs they've always shewn us."

"Only by extreme kindness, Jem, and in returning good for evil, remember that," said Smiley, growing first very red, and then very pale. "I love you, Jem, as you know; but if I ever saw a tear in Cecile's eyes, and knew you sent it there, I should hate you ! . . ."

"Oh, never fear, brother; I only want to see her humbled, not unhappy—and to behold her *cottoning* to Mar and Par, and *studying* you, whom now she, I believe, thinks quite unworthy to brush her shoes."

"I don't know any such thing; high-born people have a haughty manner, but they often mean nothing by it."

"Did she mean nothing by returning those verses you sent her?"

"Oh, I dare say that was her Mar; and I beg, when she lives here, you will do all you can to make her happy, and reconcile her to the name of Stubbs. As she is not an heiress, I

find I cannot take the name of De Vere by sign-manual, but our first boy can be De Vere Stubbs, which sounds very well."

"De Vere Smiley Stubbs," said Miss Jemima ;  
"Mamma won't thank you for sinking the Smiley."

"Ah!" thought the young lady, as she smoothed her sandy ringlets, "wait till the knot's tied, and then see if I don't pay her off all her airs and graces, her slights and insults of years. She shall have a fine time of it, I promise you, Master Smiley !" she muttered to herself, as she watched her brother horsewhipping his little tiger, for some inaccuracy in the arrangements of the turn out he was about to drive tandem past De Vere Court in the hopes of being seen by Cecile ! . . Oh love ! love !

## CHAPTER VIII.

## YOUNG LOVE.

It was while this very discussion took place about Cecile's treatment, when Mrs. Smiley Stubbs, that she, (for this account is retrospective), had, under the darkest yew tree of De Vere churchyard, listened to Dudley Harcourt's confession of deep, unalterable love, and pledged herself, in the presence of the eternal heavens and the mouldering tombs, to be the wife of his bosom, and the partner of his life.

Ah ! how little, in that hour of sacred and delicious joy, did either anticipate that, ere long, those eyes so full of mutual love could exchange

glances of defiance ; those deep, earnest voices, become vehicles of anger, contempt, and derision, and that a few words could sever those who now clung together as if worlds would never part them. Alas ! alas ! . . . How radiant in happiness they paced the avenue, till the moon came out to smile upon them. Is that pale girl now weeping so bitterly in her dark chamber, is that the affianced Cecile ? and he, the man, wandering at night in the gloomy woods of De Vere, is that the then joyous lover, is that Dudley Harcourt ?

## CHAPTER IX.

## SCANDAL.

THE Stubbs' tea-table was enlivened not merely by the discussion of the approaching ball, and the finery there to be exhibited ; but by the exaggerated reports gaining like the snowball as they rolled along, of the shifts and contrivances to which the De Veres were put in order to make any appearance at all on the important occasion.

Nor were the Stubbs family singular in the interest they felt in this subject. All Oldborough was alive with ill-natured curiosity, as to how the poor, haughty, and beautiful De Veres would be dressed ; and as next to the patrician De Veres,



the purse-proud and plebeian Coxe family were detested and envied, many rejoiced *d'avance* in the idea that these "*nouveaux riches*" would, in spite of their grand equipage and costly apparel, have to yield precedence to the shabby aristocrats.

The wives and daughters of rival surgeons, as well as those of Lawyer Stubbs, ran up long bills at obsequious milliners, because they knew their papas were running up longer ones at home; and when smart fresh dresses arrived in their black wicker baskets (wicker idols are not confined to the Druids) and out came the fresh aërial draperies of white, pink, blue, or amber tarletan, crape or aerophane, decked with bright fresh flowers, and accompanied by glistening white satin shoes, choice wreaths, and spotless and tastefully trimmed gloves, (all in wonderful taste for a country town,) we blush for human nature while we own that scarcely one heart, except Eveline Coxe's, felt ought but exhilaration, while contrasting this fresh and becoming attire

with the scanty, vamped-up, and faded dresses in which the Miss De Veres, and their still lovely mother, would again, it was maliciously whispered, be compelled to appear.

*All* the men, whom the haughty beauties had unconsciously slighted, (alas ! for the littleness of envy and malice, even in the lords of the creation) delighted to hear the ladies of their families exult in the rumours afloat on this occasion.

A respectable old doctor, who ought, after sixty years intimacy with anguish and death, to have learnt the vanity of worldly things, chuckled while his daughters told him how Miss De Vere had sent to the chemist's for some cheap ingredient to clean white kid gloves,—and how their Mamma had written for some expensive dye—which would convert a pale yellow into a bright orange—the pale yellow being doubtless that of the faded lemon-coloured poplin in which she had figured so often !

Even the son of this worthy, took an unchivalrous and unmanly pleasure in these details, and

in wondering whether Farmer Giles's old cart horses would be again harnessed to the rumbling old family coach, and in anticipating "capital sport," and that the old girl would "kick up no end of row, and the young ones look uncommon small."

"Oh, Smiley," said Jemima Stubbs, "it is quite true—those mean, old-fashioned dresses the De Veres wore last year, they are going to re-appear in them, only so much the worse."

"Like Thurtell," said Smiley, "for *Wear*;" and he laughed at the dreadful old joke, borrowed from one whom he called alternately "The Governor," and "The Relieving Officer."

Smiley Stubbs was rather showily handsome, and had some talent. He had taken a degree at Cambridge, where he got into the worst set of the very worst hall. He loved to figure in London, as a "Regent Street Gent." His sisters and their young lady friends considered him "*dashing*;" but his was a very vulgar dash, infinitely more intolerable to such people as the

De Veres, than the humblest insignificance. It was a "dash" composed of slang, cigars, occasional tandems, showy jewellery, extreme fashions, overpowering perfumes, conceit, and effrontery.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE LATE REMORSE OF LOVE.

“And to be wrath with one we love,  
Doth work like madness in the brain.”

WHO ever quarrelled with the ONE dearer than all the world beside, without feeling that the poet must indeed have “learnt in suffering what he taught in song.”

Right or wrong, it matters little. There is war where there should be peace—distrust where there should be confidence—pride where there should be the sweet humility of love—self-assertion where self should be merged in one dearer than self. Cecile De Vere was the most to

blame in the first actual quarrel that had estranged her lover. Little disputes, little differences, small "tiffs," and short-lived misunderstandings they had known; but a serious quarrel, never!

In all their minor dissensions, Dudley Harcourt had spared no pains "to make up matters," and in common parlance be friends "once more, with one, who, from the darling of his heart, was fast becoming the mistress of his thoughts; his soul's idol."

Dudley was, when he looked within, ashamed of a subjugation in which reason had no share, and passion so great a dominion! He felt that he had yielded, until Cecile had become exacting. She was beginning to lose her respect for one whose ready concessions, when she was in the wrong, seemed to him now as if he had not properly respected himself. This was not the way to teach her humility, it was the way in which pride grows into insolence. What had charmed him in Cecile, was her dignity, her lofty spirit, so well translated by her pure patri-

cian beauty ; but when first he loved her, and directly she loved him, a chastening tenderness, and softening fear inseparable from true love, had toned down the little *hauteur* and asperity of her manner, and given to her beauty that sort of heavenly softness which moonlight sends to an Alpine scene.

Dudley Harcourt had not only been deeply grieved at the want of filial respect Cecile had shown towards her mother, he had been wounded, offended, amazed, at the indomitable pride, the unfeminine scorn, the contempt she had evinced for one who was not only, as Amy had reminded her, their spiritual pastor and guide, but the one she had at first appeared to hold in that reverence and esteem, without which it is impossible for a woman to keep the vows she so solemnly takes at the altar.

It is true indeed that not one woman in thousands, nay, tens of thousands, feels, or wishes to feel, that she can reverence her husband sufficiently to "love, honour, and obey him," if she



can *like* him well enough to put up with him!—and get on with him at all!—if she can esteem him sufficiently not to show openly her internal conviction of her own superiority!—that, if the man is desirable as a husband in other respects, is generally considered by mothers and daughters to be quite enough.

The Mother says, “I got on pretty well with your Papa, my love, although I always felt that, as knowledge is power, and as intellect will always govern, my professing to look up to him was a mere form. However, I did not actually despise him; for, though no Solomon, I was lucky so far, that he was neither a fool nor a brute. If a girl of sense and spirit is unfortunate enough to marry a man that is one or both, (and many of the male creation are both,) to love, honour, or obey her husband would be simply impossible; and I suppose impossibilities are not required even of a woman!”

This is the language of worldly mothers to worldly daughters; and the faults, or sins, that

poison wedded life can generally be traced to their unwise selection. The same woman who thoughtlessly unites her fate to a man she has been persuaded to marry to please others, and whom she scorns to honour or obey, would have delighted to pay all the homage of her deep woman-heart to one in whom her mind recognized a superior being. But a good income, a fine estate, a dashing equipage, an ancient name, even good connections or fine expectations, have more weight with the young girl's counsellors than any intellectual or moral excellence, which alone can entitle a man to rule over a good and gifted woman; and if such women were resolved not to give themselves to the sensual, the frivolous, the vicious, and the ill-educated, men would take more pains to fit themselves, by intellectual and moral culture, for the dominion they aim at. For there is no man so ignorant, so soulless, or so vicious, that he does not consider himself, if his worldly advantages enable him to marry a refined, intellectual, and virtuous

woman, as much that woman's lord and master as his ancestors were the lords and masters of their wives, in the dreadful old times of *Baron et Femme*.

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE FAULT-FINDER.

EVERYTHING went wrong at the breakfast-table at the Hall, on a fine September morning, all sunshine and fresh, soft western breezes without, and all gloom and breezes of another kind within.

Sir Thomas Coxe, always in the worst of tempers, was in a state of extra irritation on this lovely morning. He had heard shots fired in his choicest preserves; and, although he had run himself out of breath, and knocked down his gamekeeper in his uncontrollable ill-temper, he had failed to discover the offender; while

the gamekeeper, a very sturdy, valuable servant, a most respectable man, who respected himself, had thrown up his place on the instant, told Sir Thomas he was no gentleman, and set off to Oldborough, to commence an action for assault and battery.

All this was bad enough, but this was not all. Coming home, he found his little girls tying the tops of some favourite young fancy larches together to make a bower, while Major Longbow Miles was sitting by their pretty young governess, a great favourite of Sir Thomas's, and his head so completely shaded under her parasol, and his whole manner and attitude so much that of a very forward, flirting admirer, that Sir Thomas, who suffered no one to flirt with Miss Clare but himself, wisely darted off in another direction, to avoid another action for assault and battery.

Then Eveline was not down to make the tea, for Sir Thomas rang for prayers half an hour earlier than usual.

And Miss Coxe, hastening down, inquired where Major Longbow Miles was, for his door was open ; and seeing him rushing across the lawn, she, too, felt sure he had been waylaying “ that pert pedant, Miss Clare,” and she began to assail her father with an oft-refused request, that he would dismiss that odious Clare.

And in the midst of all this, Lady Coxe came down very cross and very sallow, fastening her brooch, and with her bracelets in her hand ; and Eveline darted in with many apologies, and pale with terror, just as the scarlet bottle-nose of the Major peeped in at the door, and pretty Miss Clare, fresh as a rose and very sedate, led on her little, heated, panting, crimson rebels ; and the servants entered, slow and grave ; and Sir Thomas Coxe, making a sign to all to kneel, said, “ Let us pray ;” and in a loud, angry voice seemed rather to demand than implore everything good for the souls and bodies of all present, and in the tones of a war-trumpet begged for that peace that passeth all understanding.

Family prayer over, Miss Coxe said, "Papa, had not Miss Clare and the children better breakfast in the school-room to-day, as we have company?" glancing at the Major with no gentle eye.

"No!" shouted Sir Thomas Coxe; "and silence! while I say grace!"

"I never was used to grace at breakfast," said Lady Coxe, "and yet my parents were very pious."

"Very *impious*, in my opinion, if they neglected to say grace before the first meal of the day. But, whatever they did, or did not, matters little. I am master here, and grace shall never be omitted where I am."

"I wish you would not banish it so entirely from your manners, Sir Thomas," said the lady. "Of all men in the world, some one I could name is the most ungracious and ungraceful."

"Well, my dear, I do not think if I am deficient in grace you can instruct me how to improve in that respect, nor can your daughters;



Miss Coxe is too much of an amazon, Eveline of a school-girl. I think I must beg Miss Clare to give me a few hints—she, at least, is always easy, affable, and polite.”

“You are joking, Sir Thomas,” said Miss Clare; “I am sure my Lady will agree with me, that it is ill-temper that gives that angularity to the gestures, and that sharpness to the looks and tones which are so terribly at variance with the undulating laws of Grace.”

“It is very easy,” said Lady Coxe, “for people who have no cares, no trials, no expenses, anxieties or responsibilities to be very amiable ! . .”

“Well,” growled Sir Thomas, “then you, my dear, ought to be very amiable. Your cares you cast on me, on your housekeeper, and on Miss Clare ; your expenses I have to provide for ; your trials are solely from your own temper, and your anxieties and responsibilities are all cast upon Miss Clare and me.”

“How upon Miss Clare, Papa?” said Miss Coxe, who was a very sandy, not to say carrotty,

sharp-featured, small-eyed, freckled, tall, bony, and irate Miss, not in her "teens," but her "ties."

"Why, surely the education of your sisters, and their moral and mental training is your mother's chief anxiety and responsibility," growled Sir Thomas; "and let me tell you, Miss Coxe, after the ruinous sums your education has cost, if you were to lend a helping hand, and try to impart a little of what you learnt—or, at any rate, what I paid for, at Mesdames De Bonton's and Bel Esprits—it would be only doing your duty."

"Oh, Papa! I have no nerves for the irritating drudgery of teaching," said Miss Coxe; "I declare, I have such a horror of teaching, that if I were not a lady, and had to earn a livelihood, I would go on the stage."

"Yes, just to be hissed off," sneered Sir Thomas; "and let me tell you, Georgiana, many girls very much your superior in birth and breeding, are obliged to have nerves for teaching, and if

you have not, at least let me see a little more consideration for those who have.—What vile tea this is, Eveline,” he added, spitefully, emptying his cup into the slop basin; “Miss Clare, give me a cup of your coffee—at least, if you can recommend it.”

“Oh yes, it is made by my own direction, and in my own biggin, after the fashion I brought from Paris,” said Miss Clare.

“It is the only good cup of coffee I ever had in this house,” said Sir Thomas. “Can you spare the Major a cup?”

“Certainly,” said Miss Clare.

“And,” rejoined Sir Thomas, “Major Longbow Miles, help Miss Clare to some game pie—or some chicken—for I see Lady Coxe and Georgiana have sacked the pie.”

“A merry thought, Miss Clare?” said the Major.

“Yes,” replied Miss Clare, “and some tongue to give it expression.”

“Brava !” said Sir Thomas, praising Miss

Clare, not so much to please her, as to spite his wife and daughter. "A new idea on a very old subject — what say you to that, Major?"

The Major was in a fix. He was at the "Hall" as a beau of Miss Coxe's, and Miss Coxe had ten thousand pounds; but he was a desperate old flirt, and Miss Clare was very pretty, and Miss Clare was tired of being a governess, and she knew the Major was a marrying man, and very well off.

She rather liked him, for he was very gallant, good-humoured, amusing, popular, admirably dressed, full of compliments, and in his heart a good deal smitten with the pretty governess. Miss Clare had quite made up her mind, if possible, to cut out Miss Coxe, and become Mrs. Longbow Miles; but as Miss Coxe had also determined on securing the Major, his fate at present is undecided.

"I hate all puns about tongue and merry-thoughts," said Miss Coxe.

"Of course you do," said her father, "for you have not wit to hit on anything new."

"Besides," said Miss Clare, "Miss Coxe has been so *piously* disposed this morning;" and she pointed laughingly to the empty crust of the game pie, and the pile of bones on Miss Coxe's plate.

This turned the laugh against Miss Coxe.

Even the Major burst out laughing, to the unspeakable rage of the furious Georgiana. Sir Thomas indulged in prolonged shouts of laughter, partly real, partly affected, to annoy his wife and daughter.

The Major glanced with great admiration, through tears caused by the violence of his protracted cachinnations, at the self-possessed insouciant Miss Clare, who was urging her little pupils to finish their breakfast.

The Major had a great admiration for witty women, and Miss Clare rose in his estimation, and Miss Coxe sank in proportion.

"What are your plans for this morning, Major?" asked Sir Thomas.

"Nay, what are her Ladyship's?" said the Major.

"Thank you, Major," said Lady Coxe, "Sir Thomas always forgets to consult the Lady of the House."

"We had thought of riding to see the new exotics at the Botanic Gardens," said Eveline, timidly.

"Are Mr. Dudley Harcourt and Mr. Mowbray to be there?" sneered Miss Coxe.

"I believe they are," said Eveline, blushing crimson.

"I shall not go," said Lady Coxe; "I have a headache, and cannot stand the sun."

"I shall be delighted to escort the ladies," said the Major.

"I shall not go," said Miss Coxe, tossing her head; "I sprained my wrist the last time I rode 'Dart,' and I shall not mount him again."

"I will ride 'Dart,' sister, and you can have 'Mayflower.'"

"No, I shall not go at all. I have a new book to read, and some new music to try."

The two little, laughing, rosy girls, were whispering to their Papa, and glancing at the Major, when suddenly Sir Thomas Coxe said, "Well, yes, my dears, as your Mamma has a head-ache, and Georgiana is resolved to stay at home—and of course would like to be quiet—you shall have a holiday, with Miss Clare's leave, and go to the Gardens. Miss Clare, are you afraid to ride 'Dart?'"

"Oh, not at all," replied Miss Clare, enchanted at the idea.

"Pray have you riding gear, Miss Clare?" asked Lady Coxe.

"I have two habits," said Eveline; "I can lend Miss Clare one."

"And the children?" said Lady Coxe.

"Nurse shall go with them in the pony chaise," said Sir Thomas. "James shall drive,



and the Major shall escort Eveline and Miss Clare on horseback."

The children were dancing and shouting for joy; Miss Coxe was looking daggers at the Major, and Lady Coxe was deciding in her own mind that if it were not so much trouble, she would get rid of Miss Clare.

But the snug party were soon ready, and a basket of luxuries was hastily packed for this picnic under the direction of the Major, who took care not to let "the wine be left behind."

Gaily they all set off—Miss Clare, Eveline, the nurse and the children, and the purple Major!

Sir Thomas was to join them at the Botanical Gardens in time for dinner! . . .

Lady Coxe and Miss Coxe, livid with rage, were in the breakfast-room, boiling over. Sir Thomas turned in to have it out with them, and the furious discussion was at its height, and from "words" they (Sir Thomas and Lady Coxe) had almost come to "blows," when the butler

entered, aghast and pale, followed by two constables, who came to carry Sir Thomas before the nearest magistrate, on a charge of assaulting and ill-using Jeremy Snipes, game-keeper. In the end, Sir Thomas was fined ten pounds—was bound over to keep the peace, and having made an apology, and taken Snipes back into his service, joined the merry picnic party in time for dinner.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE TYRANT SLAVE.

POOR Dudley Harcourt ! he knew he deserved to be revered, even by Cecile De Vere. The formation of her mind, her temper, and her opinions, was naturally one of his duties since she was one of his parishioners, and the immense power her love for him, and her engagement to him, gave him over her heart, rendered the task easy.—He felt contrite and abashed when he recollected that in the intoxicating delight of loving and pleasing her, he had been fostering that pride and disdain, which were her besetting sins, and that actually at that moment

she was less fit to be his wife than she had been when first he had conceived the enchanting notion that she might one day be his.

Dudley Harcourt was very miserable, as day succeeded day, and no note from Cecile expressed any feeling of contrition or even regret. He had fancied that before she retired to rest she would have confessed her fault and implored his pardon, and that early in the morning he should have heard Mabel's gentle little knock at the parsonage door. He had no idea what it cost a *De Vere* to own a fault and ask forgiveness.

Cecile! And in the pride of her youth and beauty, to beg Dudley Harcourt's pardon, as if she were afraid of losing a lover, of dying an old maid! No, he should see that she had not so mean, so spaniel a spirit! If he could bear to be estranged from her, she could do very well without him.

"It must be, Amy," she said to her sister, "it must be as Mamma said. Familiarity has bred contempt; I have made myself too cheap;

I have shown him too much of the tenderness his apparent devotion was beginning to awaken in me ! Do you think when first we were engaged he would have treated me thus ? No, indeed, why at the slightest coldness he would turn pale and tremble ; and I remember, when merely in a little innocent coquetry, I called him ‘Mr. Harcourt’ instead of ‘Dudley’ when he went away at night, I saw the tears in his eyes, and long before I was up, Mabel had taken in a note and a bouquet from him, for me : and when I went down to make the tea, I found him waiting outside the library window, very pale, and really quite ill with the fear that something he had done, or left undone, had offended me ! And this same man, because he thinks himself sure of my affection, can give himself such airs as these ! Find fault with me, school me, rebuke me, leave me in anger, and take no pains to effect a reconciliation !”

“I think you wrong him, Cecile,” Amy had replied. “I am certain that he loves you more

than ever, and still, if he fancied he had in any way slighted or offended you, would be as miserable and as anxious as he was on the occasion you allude to. But this is a different matter, Cecile ! He thinks you have shown a defiance and contempt which prove that even if you love, you do not respect him ; and much as he loves, nay idolises you, his principles and opinions are such, that I feel certain if he thought you incapable of that sort of love which forms his beau ideal of a wife's affection, he would break with you ; his doing so might be his death, for you are his all in all ; but he would do it."

" And if he doesn't, I will !" said Cecile, with flashing eyes. " I am not made to be a slave, and that he shall see."

Cecile was at her morning toilet while this conversation took place. Three days had passed drearily away since the evening of that First Lover's Quarrel with Dudley Harcourt. Dudley had not been to De Vere Court since ; no message, no meeting on either side. Yet, generally

the young Vicar called soon after breakfast, walked, read, practised singing and the organ with Cecile and Amy, and took them with him to teach in the schools, and to visit the poor and the sick. The time had seemed intolerably heavy to Cecile, since her estrangement from her lover, she not only lost his enchanting presence, his love-prompted attentions, and his bright, intellectual conversation, but all her most interesting and engrossing pursuits were mixed up with him.

The Misses De Vere had been working heart and soul with the young Vicar in the parish. The choir, the schools, the poor, the sick, all under his wise guidance were beginning to reap the advantage of possessing, instead of an aged and easy divine of the old school, a young earnest and zealous clergyman of the present day. Dudley was trying to establish the daily service, and that in a village where hitherto, as the late Vicar had another cure in the adjoining parish, there had only been one service on Sunday. Of course he



met with great opposition. Sir Thomas Coxe called himself a staunch Protestant, and unaware that at his ordination every Protestant Priest *undertakes to perform the Church Service daily*, thought it his duty to sneer at what he considered Papistical. Sir Thomas Coxes abode was called the Hall; it was a large modern pillared building, standing on grounds that had belonged to a De Vere, when the Coxes were small traders on Fish Street Hill, and it contributed to Dudley's early morning congregation only Eveline Coxe, and occasionally her brother Ferdinand when he was at home from College. Amy and Cecile had never missed, since first they had promised Dudley to be present, until the morning after that first fatal quarrel, when Cecile, to Amy's deep distress, told her that she had a headache, and should not leave her room all day. Amy saw by her manner and the expression of her countenance that it would be vain to remonstrate, and she went alone.

Amy was in hopes, as Cecile and herself always

officiated as organists at the early morning service, that Dudley would not be aware of Cecile's absence. She tried to play with the *aplomb* and expression of Cecile ; but the anxiety of her heart made her hands tremble so, that instead of surpassing herself, she had never played so badly. It was always on these occasions a very, very small congregation, and the few that attended seemed to do so rather out of personal regard for the young Vicar and the Misses De Vere, than from duty to God, or care for their souls. The school, of course attended, and here and there a rusty old black bonnet, and time-stained red cloak, marked out some old pensioner of Dudley's, Amy's, or Cecile's, who said and thought, that " she wished to make some return for their good kindness, and hadn't the heart to stay away when they'd so begged her to come— particular after that warm flannel petticoat and new shoes." Here and there too, worn-out old labourers, no longer considered worthy of their hire, knelt with rickety knees on the

rickety boards, and the palsy which shook their heads had not reached their hearts, for, as they said, "they loved to oblige the dear young Parson who was as good as a son to them."

De Vere church was very large and very lofty, and on those occasions used to look very empty, and Dudley Harcourt's fine voice, waking the echoes around, had a hollow and solemn sound.

On this morning the attendance was unusually thin. Amy stole a glance at Dudley through the crimson silk curtains that concealed the choir; she saw with pain that he looked even paler than usual, very sorrowful, and somewhat stern and resolute. Eveline Coxe was in the gorgeous pew belonging to her purse-proud family, and by her side sate one, whose unexpected presence sent "the orient blush of quick surprise," and perhaps of a livelier feeling still, to Amy's soft face. She only caught one glimpse of a head of clustering, dark, auburn hair; a frank bold, regular profile, and a large

dark eye, and then she drew back into a corner, let down her thick veil, and drew her shawl around her, and the next time she had to play, her cold and trembling fingers would scarcely move over the keys, and her voice, which in Cecile's absence had to lead the choir, failed her entirely. Amy felt very angry with herself, that even under that roof the thought that *he* would be at the Oldborough ball, would flash across her heart with a sort of electricity of joy.

And then she was conscious of a wish equally reprehensible, that she could appear in something more becoming and modish than the old dress which had never before seemed to her fancy so old-fashioned and so much to be deplored.

Amy resolutely drove both these worldly feelings, the joy and the regret, from her mind ; what was Ferdinand Coxe to her ? what could he ever be to her ? Had she not witnessed the indignation and the scorn with which his eldest brother's offer to Cecile had been refused ? Ferdinand was as unlike Thomas as possible, but

he was still a Coxe, and what could a Coxe expect from the united houses of Lorraine and De Vere?

Amy felt very sad, as, the service over, she busied herself among the music books, until she hoped that both the Coxes and Dudley had left the church and the churchyard.

She did not wish Dudley to see that Cecile was not with her; not only she thought it would wound him deeply, but that Cecile would sink in his opinion, for suffering a quarrel with him to influence her in a matter of religious duty.

"If once she lowers herself in his opinion, and loses his confidence and esteem," thought Amy, "his love will not suffice, and he himself will break off the match! and what will that not be to Cecile! Not only she loves him, in spite of this foolish quarrel, with all the devotion of a proud, passionate heart, that loves for the first time, but to be resigned, rejected, cast off as it were, will humble her to the dust. What can I do to save her from a misery and a mortifica-

tion, her present haughty, petulant, and ill-judged resentment will entail upon her. If once Dudley feels convinced that she does not look up to him, and love him, with the sort of love he looks for in a wife, he will break with her even if his own peace and happiness are sacrificed with his engagement—and yet he is wrong ; he might mould her, he might form her, he might subdue her pride.

“ She is capable of loving him so tenderly, of being all he would have her—but how can I, her sister, with her dignity to keep up, tell him this ? — and how certain they both are, in their present moods, to doom themselves to eternal regrets, and ‘ the late remorse of love. ’ ”

## CHAPTER XIII.

## AN UNEXPECTED GUEST.

WHEN Amy left the church, she saw at the further end of the churchyard, which adjoined the Vicarage garden, and standing at its gate, Eveline and Ferdinand Coxe in close conversation with Dudley Harcourt. It had been a rainy autumn morning, but the sun had come out and shone full on the pale, classic features, and clustering fair hair of Dudley ; who, in his Master of Arts' gown and red hood, and his college cap, looked singularly picturesque and interesting as the sun slanted upon him through the dark boughs of the yew. He was smiling



in reply to something Eveline Coxe had said, but it was a mournful smile; on perceiving Amy, he bowed; Eveline kissed her hand, and Ferdinand raised his hat. For one moment Dudley Harcourt seemed disposed to turn from the gate and approach Amy De Vere, but the next he changed his mind, opened the wicket-gate and ushered Eveline and Ferdinand Coxe into his garden.

“Cecile will cross-question me,” thought Amy; “and here will be a new offence. She was always disposed to be jealous of poor Eveline, and now she will feel certain that Dudley is transferring his affections.”

Unwilling to meet her sister, Amy lingered in the flower garden, visited her poultry and rabbits, went into the breakfast room and made the tea, and finally went up to the dressing-room which she shared with Cecile.

To her surprise, the latter, whom she had left lying on her bed in her wrapper, and complaining of a head-ache, she found, up, rather flushed,

somewhat excited, and dressed with unusual care. Her hair was braided as Cecile seldom braided it, except for Dudley—a white muslin dress, trimmed with pink ribbons, and a jaunty little black satin apron, set off her singular beauty to great advantage. This white dress, of a fine embroidered muslin, was Cecile's best dress, and Amy was amazed to see her in it.

"Where are you going Cecile?" she asked.  
 "Why are you ~~dressed~~?" *What I desire?*

"I am not going anywhere," replied Cecile, with assumed cheerfulness; "but we have company to breakfast—look here, Mamma has just sent me this; she says Papa has had a very bad, disturbed night, and she is so worn out she cannot get up, so we must receive Mr. Claverhouse, who comes from no less important a person than Mamma's uncle, Lord Rockalpine—read this letter, Amy."

"Hotel des Princes, Paris.

"MY DEAR NIECE,

"It is many years since you and I have

met. I am getting very old and very grey ; and as the Present grows hourly more 'stale, flat, and unprofitable,' and the Future dwindles to the shortest span, my thoughts and feelings centre a good deal in that Past, in which a certain fair, golden-haired little niece, yclept Cecilia Lorraine, was a very prominent figure. I wish much to know how your 'love match' turned out, and of what your family consists. I am willing to let bye-gones be bye-gones ; and, though I have, as you know, little but good wishes to offer, I should like to kiss the cheek of my little 'Cis' before I die. Mr. Claverhouse is going to spend a week or two at my shooting-box, near Oldborough. Perhaps your husband can help him to some good shooting. At any rate, any attention you show him will oblige me ; and I shall hear from him and, I hope, from you too, everything I want to know.

"I am, dear Cis,

Your affectionate Uncle, .

"ROCKALPINE."

“Well, with this letter came a note. Here it is:—

“‘Mr. Claverhouse will be shooting to-morrow morning in the neighbourhood of De Vere Court, and will take the liberty of calling at Mrs. De Vere’s breakfast hour, and of asking her to give him a cup of coffee, in return for tidings of her Uncle, his friend, the Earl of Rockalpine. Mr. Claverhouse hopes to present himself at Mrs. De Vere’s breakfast table at nine o’clock.’”

“It wants a quarter to nine,” said Cecile, “so you have just time to change your dress, Amy, while I go down, and make what improvements I can in our scanty breakfast. Oh! by the bye, who was at church?”

“Old Giles, and Job Trotter, and Matthew Potter, and Simon Shake, and poor old Mrs. Grumble, and Molly Brake, and Phillis Furrow. Yes, and old Winfred, and Patty Whine—the school children, of course. It rained, so the church was very thinly attended.”

"No one else?—not Eveline Coxe?"

"Oh, yes—Eveline and Ferdinand Coxe."

"Did Mr. Harcourt speak to you?"

"No—I tried to keep out of his way."

"Did he speak to them?"

"Yes."

"I dare say he asked them in. They are always getting into his garden under some pretence or other."

Amy did not reply.

"Did he ask them in?"

"Yes! And they went with him?"

"Of course they did; but what of that?"

"Oh! nothing," said Cecile, deadly pale, and tears starting to her eyes. "Make haste, I'm going to send to old Giles for cream and eggs. Be quick, and dress in white."

Cecile and Amy De Vere sate together in the breakfast-room, awaiting the arrival of Mr. Claverhouse. The quaint, old, embossed silver coffee and tea service, and the delicate, antique china, adorned with the De Vere arms, gave

an aristocratic elegance to the breakfast table, although none of the viands usually to be found on a table covered with such a damask, and adorned by such solid silver and delicate porcelain, were to be found there. The home-made loaf, and some fresh butter and honeycomb from Farmer Giles's, seemed very simple fare, when contrasted with such armorial bearings; and all Cecile was able to do was to add a few new-laid eggs and rashers of bacon to the simple repast.

Great, then, was her surprise and satisfaction, when she was told that Mrs. Giles herself begged the honour of a moment's speech with her. The object of that good old lady's visit was to say that, having heard from Mabel, who had been sent to the farm for the cream and eggs, that a visitor was coming unexpectedly to breakfast at the Court, sent there by Madam's own uncle, the Earl of Rockalpine, she had taken the liberty of bringing over a large game pie which she had made the day before for Farmer Giles himself, and had, as it was baking-day,

brought a few hot rolls with her, fresh from the oven.

No present ever came more *à propos*. It was a noble pie, or rather pasty. Mrs. Giles was famous for her pastry; and such was the reverence for the De Veres, of this good woman, whose mother and grandmother had been house-keepers in the family, that she considered Cecile's gracious acceptance of the offering as a great honour done her, and felt sure Farmer Giles would share her feeling.

The *dejeuner* was now all Cecile could wish; and the two sisters formed a charming contrast, in their soft, white, muslin dresses; pink bows setting off Cecile's dark-brown hair and rich complexion—and sky-blue knots making Amy's snow-drop skin look fairer still, and her golden hair more delicately bright.

The room used by the De Veres as a breakfast room was in reality the library, just the sort of quaint, old room, paneled with dark oak between the book-cases, with gothic windows,



partly of stained glass, and rich, old, crimson draperies, that painters delight to represent and enliven by figures of the days of the cavaliers.

It was a lovely autumn morning—so warm that, although a fire of logs added to the picturesque beauty and comfortable air of the room, it was pleasant to have the windows open, and let the fresh faces of the monthly roses, and the emerald leaves and tempting clusters of grapes, white and purple, peep into the room. The floor was of polished oak; and an old but still rich turkey carpet covered the centre. There were seats in the deep recesses of the windows, covered with crimson cushions. All the furniture was of black oak, richly carved, and crimson velvet, originally so good that time seemed to have no power to wear out its texture or dim its hue, which was that of the richest ruby. On the rug lay a fine old English bloodhound, Hubert by name, and a tiny snow-white French poodle, a little ball of snowy curls, Cecile's pet; while, in perfect amity with the canine pets, a

large, round-faced, carrotty tom-cat, Rufus by name, a great darling of Amy's, purred his approval—he always did so—of the preparations for breakfast.

“I think I had better make the tea and order the coffee,” said Cecile. “It is half-past nine. Papa and mamma must be sadly in want of their breakfast. Mamma means to come down and speak to Mr. Claverhouse herself, Amy, if we can detain him till she is dressed. I have never seen her, poor dear mother! so pleased or so excited as she is by this unexpected notice from Lord Rockalpine. I had no idea she cared so much for one whose great unkindness to her always made me compare him to the uncle in the ‘Babes in the Wood.’ She says he was a father to her till she offended him by not marrying a nobleman he had selected for her, his own great friend; and that he foretold, in order to deter her from uniting herself to a ruined man, much of the misery and mortification she has had to endure. She thinks now, if Mr.

## A LOVER'S QUARREL.

Claverhouse makes a good report of us, Lord Rockalpine may invite us to Paris, or come to his shooting-box here; and, though he is poor (for a peer), yet what is poverty to him, would be affluence and splendour to us."

"But you would not like to go to Paris, Cecile, would you, even if Lord Rockalpine did invite us?" said Amy.

"Why not?" asked Cecile, her cheek flushing, and a proud fire in her eye.

"Because Dudley Harcourt so dreads and dislikes Paris," replied Amy.

"Dudley Harcourt, Amy, is not acting in a way to make me care much what he likes or dislikes. I have been a great deal too gentle, submissive, and malleable in his cold hands. I cannot think what has made me appear to him the very reverse of what I really am. I have not intended to deceive him, and I cannot conceive what has caused me to assume the Griselda. I fear I have more of the Vashti than the Esther in my composition. What can have

made me, I, who scorn all seeming, act more like the latter."

"Love!" said Amy.

"Love! and he could inspire such love in my proud heart, as to change my very nature, and then insult, neglect, and slight me thus! It was not by censure, rebuke, disdain, and cold neglect he won my heart; but by them he shall lose it. Every hour that stretches its cold gloom between us, Amy, adds to my conviction that he is unworthy of me. I am glad I have discovered that though love's fetters are wreathed with roses, they are fetters still. I was becoming a slave, sister! And slaves make tyrants. There would be no tyrants among men if women would not be slaves. It is well Dudley reveals himself before it is too late. If it is misery now to find he can trample on the heart he has won, it would be madness had I discovered it when bound to him 'by the knot there's no untying.'"

"Hush!" said Amy, "I hear a ring at the gate! dogs! steps! It must be Mr. Claverhouse."

Amy was right; the flash and the tear still twinkled in Cecile's eye, and her cheek was still flushed with pride and anger, when the door was thrown open, and Mr. Claverhouse was announced.

Mr. Claverhouse was strikingly handsome, tall, slight, and very graceful—easy, and rather *enjoué* in his manner. His age it was difficult to guess, for the expression was rather too old to tally with the thick clustering jet black hair and dazzling teeth; his short upper lip was adorned by a silky black moustachio, his hair, eyebrows, and whiskers were jet black. He was dressed as French dandies dress, "*pour la chasse au fusil*," and as we can see them represented in any book of *Modes de Paris* in which Parisian exquisites are depicted. But he *was* straight from Paris, and the sisters soon discovered, that though of English parentage, he had been brought up on the Continent. He had rather a military air; and little as Amy and Cecile were accustomed to strangers (gentlemen especially), he

soon made them feel perfectly at their ease, by being quite at home himself.

This was the first time that any gentleman, except Dudley Harcourt, had ever breakfasted with them at that table. When Amy saw Mr. Claverhouse about to take the very seat by Cecile which Dudley always occupied, she proposed he should sit at the other side. Amy had a sister's love and a disciple's reverence for Dudley, and she could not bear to see another in his place ; but Cecile insisted. Mr. Claverhouse then took his seat by Cecile's side, and while she exerted herself to amuse him, and was, alas ! pleased at his glances of admiration, Amy felt as if obliged to take a part in what she felt to be wrong, while an ominous dread of some approaching evil blanched her cheek, chilled her manner, and silenced her tongue.

The conversation between Cecile and the guest was lively and well-sustained. He talked of Paris, French society, the English abroad, his dear old friend Rockalpine and the few dull days



he had spent at his Lordship's shooting box near Oldborough. He made the girls laugh by his clever caricatures of the Stubbs family, the vulgar Jemima, the "Regent Street Gent," Smiley Stubbs, the rival medical men and their ugly daughters, old Hearty and his Dame, and "Frost" of the Family Hotel, whom he described as "the man that could never get warm." He then touched upon the Coxes: declared Sir Thomas's father (not his grandfather) had made all the money they were now enjoying, on Fish Street Hill; called Eveline a pretty, unformed little plebeian, and made them laugh at the absurdities of Thomas Coxe, the eldest son, when he had spent a month in Paris.

The ball, was of course, one of the topics discussed. Cecile hoped he would attend it, begged he would attend it; and he replied, if she would dance the first two dances with him, and as many after as she could spare, he would try to be there, nay, he would promise to be there, although he had to rush to Paris and back in the interval.



"The ball," said Cecile, "takes place this day fortnight."

"Capital!" replied he. "I shall have a quiet week's shooting here, and then run over to Paris, and be back the very day of the ball."

"Oh, I do not think you will take all that trouble for the Oldborough ball."

"No, certainly; but for the Oldborough belle I shall think it no trouble at all!"

Oh! how this silly, weak, coquettish Cecile De Vere, who thought herself so proud in resenting Dudley's behaviour, and was so mean in trifling and flirting thus with a total stranger, wished that she had some *chef-d'œuvre* of a Parisian ball dress, in which to show him that the "Oldborough Belle" was worth more trouble than Dudley Harcourt seemed inclined to take.

In the course of the morning it came out, that though the sportsman's head-quarters were Rockalpine Lodge, placed at his service by the Earl, he, finding all the game had taken refuge at De Vere, had just hired a lodging at a pretty

cottage where two rooms were to be let, and where a very smiling blue-eyed blonde was to wait upon him. The cottage turned out to be that of Mabel's father, the pretty girl, Mabel herself.

"I shall be quite *au courant*," he said, "in the history of every one in Oldborough and De Vere; for I find the pretty Mabel's little hands and feet are not as nimble as her tongue."

The deepest crimson suffused the face and neck of Cecile; of course Mabel would take care to talk of the intimacy at the Court of the young Vicar; of course so shrewd and cleve ra girl had discovered the engagement between her and Dudley Harcourt, although, at Mrs. De Vere's request, it was kept a secret from the world in general. Cecile rose and went to the window to conceal her confusion, and at this moment Mrs. De Vere entered the room.

Mrs. De Vere was generally very cold, distant, and inaccessible to the very few visitors who ventured to call at Court De Vere. To the

county people she resolved to show, that though she could not return their visits in modish attire and stylish equipage, she considered her notice an honour, and their presence an intrusion ; and as to the townspeople, the rival lawyers, and the rival doctors, one visit to Court De Vere, was quite enough for the Stubbses, the Smiths, and Browns, for they found when it came to the point, that neither their brazen faces nor golden chains and bracelets availed them aught in the haughty presence of the granddaughter of an Earl, and amid the faded glories of Court De Vere, where the very old starched housemaid who admitted them, had about her something more aristocratic than their gaudy selves, and shut the Hall door haughtily in the rosy faces of their coachman and footman.

Even Mrs. Ormsby, charming and elegant as she was, and much as she wished to be intimate with the fair daughters of one who had been a friend of her mother's, received no encouragement at Court De Vere. Mrs. De Vere de-

spised any woman of patrician birth who could marry a solicitor—the virtues, the merits, the talents, and the devoted attachment on both sides, weighed as nothing in her balance. Almeria Ormsby was the daughter of her former intimate, Lady Almeria—she, too, was the granddaughter of an Earl, and she had married a low-born county town attorney.—Her father's agent! her grandfather's man of business!—a creature who still actually practised in the very town to which the Earl of Oldborough gave his name! A man who ran up bills, charged six-and-eight-pences, wrote lawyer's letters, put in distresses, and was in fact an attorney—for all she knew, a pettifogger! . . . Of all the people who called at Court De Vere, none were more haughtily repulsed than the Ormsbys; she dreaded Mrs. Ormsby's example, especially for Amy, and she never even returned her visit.

All that was soft and sweet in Mrs. Ormsby, seemed to her mean and truckling; and all that

in Mr. Ormsby was dignified, reserved, and refined, she considered impertinent, artful, and aspiring.

Cecile and Amy were surprised, then, at the graceful cordiality and fascinating *empressement* with which Mrs. De Vere welcomed Mr. Claverhouse — Courtney Claverhouse was his name. In her anxious and minute enquiries after her uncle—his health, looks, habits, occupations and feelings, they saw, for the first time, how much the recollection of her early days at Rockalpine Castle in Wales, and Rockalpine House in Berkeley Square, was treasured in her heart. How bitterly she had all along felt the poverty and seclusion of her haughty, isolated life—how dear was the once indulgent, long unforgiving uncle—and how lively an interest she took even in the old Lord Bagshot, still a bachelor, almost living at his club, her rejection of whom, for the ruined De Vere, had shut her out for ever from her uncle's favour, and the society she had so loved and adorned.

Courtney Claverhouse had a happy knack of answering cordially. He seemed to take as deep an interest as Mrs. De Vere herself in all the subjects they discussed. To the amazement and consternation of the girls, she invited him to dinner, To dinner ! no one but Dudley Harcourt had ever, since their birth, been invited to dine at Court De Vere.

“ I have to thank you, Mr. Claverhouse,” she said, with a sweet smile, “ for a most liberal present of game. Mr. De Vere is a confirmed invalid, and we have no gamekeeper (her guest knew that as well as she did) : it will be a great treat to him. I hope, before you leave this neighbourhood, to have the pleasure of introducing you to him.”

“ Is he a very great sufferer ?” asked Claverhouse, with much sympathy.

“ He is a hypochondriac,” said Mrs. De Vere, with the slightest possible curl of the lip, and changed the subject. “ To-day he is not visible, and you must be content with a little

quiet family dinner, with the Miss De Veres and myself."

"I am never so happy," said Courteney, rising, "as when my society is exclusively of the fair sex. I have little sympathy with Frenchmen, and none with Englishmen. The shifting politics of the time have no interest for me, when I see that placemen, not patriots, carry the day; and the struggle is not who shall serve his country best, but who shall fleece her most—not who shall uphold *her* among the nations, but who shall uphold himself. I might get into parliament at once, but there is in my case a great, an insurmountable impediment."

"And what is that?" asked Mrs. De Vere, with interest.

"I have a conscience—Ah! you may smile, but it is the greatest drawback a man can have—it is worse than a hump. I was in the army, conscience made that profession odious to me. Reared by a delicate, virtuous, high-souled mother," and a tear stood in his fine eyes,



“ribaldry and blasphemy wounded my ears—sensual pleasures and school-boy frolics had no charms. I saw no prospect of war, and the life of an officer in country quarters was intolerable to me. I left the army and tried diplomacy—I liked it no better: as an attaché to the embassy. I was shut up with lads more silly and more sensual than my brother officers of the — Dragoons. I left the embassy, and am now an idle man. Literature and *les beaux arts* are my delight, and I find a great deal more taste, sentiment, and sympathy among women than men. I will now, with your permission, release you from my prosy egotism till dinner time. I know that ladies hate a man who does not know when to go, and like to have their mornings to themselves—my own dear mother does. I shall go and walk through the woods of De Vere, with my gun and dogs, and then I shall sit quietly down with my portfolio, and I hope bring you in a tolerable water-colour sketch of your dear old church. *Au revoir, mesdames !*”

“What a thoroughbred, delightful man,” said Mrs. De Vere; “how gentle, how graceful, how accomplished. It seemed like old times to me to talk once more with such a man; and now, my dears, you must help me to prepare for him. I could not avoid asking him to dinner, and yet it is quite an undertaking for us to have even an old friend, like Dudley, to our family dinner. I suppose we must dine in the hall, and adjourn to the drawing-room.”

“It would be best,” said Cecile, “only the drawing-room has not been opened, used, or dusted for months.”

“And your Papa is in one of his worst and most exacting moods. He has taken it into his head that his strength is diminished by his hair, whiskers, eye-brows, and moustache, and I left him resolved to shave them all off.”

“Oh, but I hope he won’t do that,” said Cecile, “he will make himself look such a fright, and it seems such a very insane thing to do.”

“ Ah, you may well say that, Cecile ; and he became so excited when I opposed it, that any stranger would have thought him insane. I do hope he will not present himself to Mr. Claverhouse to-day. It is a sad thing for a family when any suspicion of such an interdict as insanity gets into the whispers of its enemies ; and although I am no matchmaker, and think, of all characters, a manœuvring mother is the most contemptible, yet, as my proud Cecile has made her humble choice, of Love in a Cottage, and my Amy is fancy free, I should not be sorry to see her Mrs. Claverhouse. I think Lord Rockalpine must have had some such scheme in his head, when he sent such a very captivating and desirable man to the secluded beauties of Court De Vere. There never was such an inveterate matchmaker as my dear, dear uncle.”

“ I don't particularly admire Mr. Claverhouse, Mamma !” said Amy.

“ So much the better ; he is the more likely

to admire you — what do you think of him, Cecile ?”

“I think such a man, so brilliant, so intellectual, so full of sentiment and sympathy, would be quite thrown away on our Amy, whose taste is all for the most humdrum worthy men, and the most domestic duties of life,” said Cecile. “But I think I had better go to the farm, Mamma, and ask Mrs. Giles to come up and superintend the dinner ; she will gladly do so, for the sake of ‘the Auld Lang Syne,’ and the credit of Court De Vere.”

“Mamma,” said Amy, “if I may offer an opinion, it is that we had better dine in this room, and take tea in your own little boudoir. If the hall and the great drawing-room have to be cleaned, we never can be ready ; and it will be so chill, so dark, so dreary, and so wretched — a neat little dinner, nicely cooked and punctually served in this room, would be surely much better than a failure in the great hall, after Mr. Claverhouse has been starving for two or

three hours. He cannot fancy we are rich—of course Lord Rockalpine has told him all. I see by his smile, and the merry twinkle in his eye, he has a keen sense of the ridiculous—there is nothing ridiculous in poverty; but in pretension there certainly is.”

Mrs. De Vere was not convinced by Amy's sensible arguments, but when she entered the drawing-rooms, and saw the chandeliers hung with cobwebs, and crusted with dust—the sofas and chairs moth-eaten and even mouse-bitten—several window panes broken, and a cold, damp, dusty, fusty smell pervading everything, she began to think Amy right; and when, at the first attempt to kindle a fire, the room was filled with smoke, she gave it up in despair and wisely agreed to all Amy had suggested.

While Cecile went to the farm, Mrs. De Vere, quite ignorant of the quarrel between the affianced lovers, desired Amy to write a note to Dudley Harcourt, and invite him to dinner.

Amy was rejoiced at what seemed to her so

likely to lead to a reconciliation and hastened to comply before Cecile could return and raise any objection.

She wrote a pretty, affectionate little note, and sent it at once. Her messenger (a village boy) soon returned with a reply.

She tore it open and read :—

“MY DEAR MISS AMY,

“Many thanks to your kind Mamma, but I am engaged to dine at the Coxes.

“I am your sincere friend,

“DUDLEY. HARCOURT.”

“What a pity!” said Mrs. De Vere. “I am sure they would have suited each other exactly, would Dudley Harcourt and Mr. Claverhouse. I cannot think how Dudley can bear those vulgar *parvenues* the Coxes, so thoroughly refined and well-bred as he is. However, they are so ready to help in all Dudley’s charities, so liberal in their subscriptions to the schools, and so ready with their soup, coals, and blankets at Christ-

mas, that I suppose he cannot well refuse to dine there occasionally ; but it must be a great bore to him."

Amy thought no place could be unpleasant where sweet Eveline Coxe smiled and talked and sang ; but she did not say so. She knew Mrs. De Vere was always irritated to find her affection for a Coxe still unchanged and unchangeable, and she did not wish to see her mother vexed, particularly when, for the first time, a guest with power to interest and amuse her, had appeared at Court De Vere. Mabel Moss had been at one time in the service of the De Veres as attendant on the young ladies in their nursery and school-room days ; but as every year diminished their means, they had found it necessary to dispense with all servants but a cook, a housemaid, and an out-door lad.

Mabel, on quitting the De Veres, did not seek another situation ; she was very clever at her needle, and both went out to the people of the neighbourhood to make dresses, and took in all



sorts of mantua making and millinery (for her humbler customers) at the pretty little cottage where her father lived, and where Courtney Claverhouse had taken the two neat, cheerful rooms, the letting of which was a great help to their small income. Mabel was a very pretty, handy, amiable young woman, about six-and-twenty. She was only twelve when the De Vere family first noticed her and allowed her to become half playmate, half servant to Cecile and Amy, then of the ages of four and six. Naturally graceful, delicate, and quick, her manners in the severe school of Mrs. De Vere became almost polished, and she picked up a good deal of knowledge of different kinds in her close attendance in the school-room in the time of Miss Crabbe. Mabel was a very affectionate, kind-hearted girl; but she had her faults, a little sly, a little vain, and a very amusing, but a very great chatter-box. She would have done a world of mischief in most places; and even as it was, working as she did at the De Veres, the Coxes, the Orms-

bys and even at Lady Rivers's, and the Countess of Oldborough's, she had quite unintentionally widened some breaches, fomented some discords, perpetuated some feuds, and circulated some tittle tattle.

She was devoted to the Misses De Vere. All other work was cast aside directly she was wanted at Court De Vere.

In her heart she looked down on the Coxes, and though she liked sweet gentle Eveline Coxe, she had, during her long sojourn at Court De Vere, fully imbibed the idea that they were nobodies.

Of Mrs. Ormsby too, she always thought and spoke much as Mrs. De Vere did.

Mabel knew perfectly well that Dudley Harcourt and Cecile De Vere were engaged, although nothing had ever been said to her on the subject ; but she did not quite approve, for she took her tone from Mrs. De Vere. She acknowledged that he was a perfect gentleman by birth and education, very handsome, very good ; but she thought

such a beauty as Miss Cecile might look a great deal higher, and that it would be a thousand pities she should pass from Court De Vere to De Vere Vicarge, without one peep at the gay world ; never having been presented ; never worn feathers, diamonds, or a train ; never shown herself at that opera, at those balls, or in that park, of which she had read in the novels Miss Crabbe used to hire at Oldborough, and read in the long dull hours when her pupils were gone early to bed, and which Mabel had often sate up all night, after Miss Crabbe had retired, to devour by stealth. Mabel had always settled in her own mind that Miss Cecile would make a grand match, and go to London, and (it was an old nursery promise) take Mabel with her, as “her own woman,” as the elder novelists say. Mabel longed to see “London and high life,” and it was thus she hoped and expected to do so.

It was therefore a real blow to her when she found out, long before Cecile did so, why she never approached the pretty parsonage, (when in

the old Vicar's time, she was quite at home there) and yet would watch its quaint old roof, visible from her bedroom, when it was bathed in the red sunset, or silvered by the moonbeams, or grey in the dawn, or looming darkly in the early closing night of winter. Mabel marked, and with many misgivings, the deep and earnest attention, the changing colour, the tearful eye, the zealous attendance, the punctuality, the eagerness to promote the young Vicar's views, and assist heart and hand in all his pious schemes of parish reform. She soon found out there was an attachment, and as she was working at Court De Vere when Dudley proposed and was accepted, she soon knew all, as well as if she had been told all, (which in her heart she thought she ought to have been).

Mabel felt convinced that unless Miss Cecile and Mr. Harcourt were affianced, Mrs. De Vere would not permit them to sit *tête-à-tête* in the library, or walk by the hour up and down the avenue and the terrace. Still less would Cecile

have dared receive, often more than once every day, a note from Dudley, and devote hours to writing long answers, crossed and recrossed, which Mabel felt sure none but a lover would have patience to read or write.

“There’s nothing exactly objectionable in the match,” thought Mabel, “but to my mind it would suit Miss Eveline Coxe much better than our beautiful Miss Cecile ! A woman should always raise herself by marriage. It would be a rise for Miss Eveline. It’s quite the reverse for Miss Cecile. A life of church-going, chaunting, schooling, visiting the sick and poor ! broth-making, working ! I dare say it’s very Christian and right ; but if I were Miss Cecile, I’d see life before I settled ’down among old red cloaks and black bonnets for ever ; and I don’t think she’ll have her own way much, either. She hasn’t now he’s her lover, and if she hasn’t now, it isn’t likely she will, when he’s her lord and master. He’d have suited Miss Amy better ; for though love may change Miss Cecile into a

lamb now, there's a good share of the lioness about her ; and when she shows it, I don't think he'll like it, and they won't be happy. She is not cut-out to be a country parson's wife, and I wish with all my heart it had never been, or could be broken off ! but there's no hope of that, for he loves her with all his heart, and she doats on him, more than it's ever wise or safe for any woman to doat on a man. It makes a slave of her, and slaves make tyrants."

Mabel came to the same conclusion as Cecile had done ; but they were both disciples of Mrs. De Vere, and Mabel had as much pride and as many high-flown notions as any De Vere or Lorraine of them all. It was in some respects a proper pride, and a great safeguard to a pretty girl, particularly one not at all disposed to underrate her personal advantages, or to disdain the homage they elicited.

It chanced that Mabel was mantua-making at Court De Vere, helping the young ladies to prepare for the ball, on the evening of the first



quarrel between the lovers. She had been sent by Mrs. De Vere into the sitting-room, where they were, to fetch a work-box she had left there. Mabel saw at a glance, heard at a word, the state of affairs, and hope revived in her heart! She felt indignant that any man should dare to take Miss Cecile to task, and he only a lover. "If he was so "audacious" as a lover, what would he not be as a husband? and Miss Cecile looking so beautiful and so proud—he ought to have been ashamed of himself!"

Mabel was just going home when Dudley took his leave. She was in the parterre beneath the terrace, when Amy went out after him. Mabel knew Cecile had not been to the early service for the two next days. She saw she was restless, feverish, anxious, perhaps miserable, but very angry. She knew Mr. Harcourt had made no concession, and she did not much think he would make any. She had a woman's instinct in reading character, and she saw firmness was the substratum of his. She felt certain that womanly



pride, (besides the pride of the De Veres and Lorraines,) would keep up Cecile's anger, unless her lover made some advances or some apology.

“And, then, while matters were in this state, comes the finest gentleman that had ever crossed the threshold of Court De Vere in her (Mabel's) days—sent, too, by ‘Madam's’ own uncle, Lord Rockalpine—sent, of course, to make up to one of the young ladies. Such a polite, pleasant, sweet-spoken gentleman!—such black eyes and white teeth, such curly hair and such a moustache!—his clothes not like any one else's at Oldborough or De Vere, so stylish! Then his dressing-case, it was quite a sight! and when he was dressed for dinner, Parson Harcourt, with his black suit and white tie (though he was a fine man, for a fair man, and had a look of a statue, and a smile like the St. John at Lord Rivers's), wouldn't look much by that pink of politeness and love of a gentleman!”

Mabel could not believe that it would be Miss Amy he would fall in love with. He seemed

made for Miss Cecile ; and, coming just at this particular time, Mabel hoped it was not wrong to wish he might cut out Mr. Harcourt, who couldn't be as miserable as he ought to be, when he had offended Miss Cecile, or he wouldn't go gallivanting about with Miss Eveline Coxe ! —dining there too !—which Mabel thought a piece of great good luck, as otherwise he might have been at Court De Vere, and have prevented Mr. Claverhouse's coming forward, by telling him he was engaged to Miss Cecile ; and now Mabel hoped she would be so offended with him for being able to go out to dinner, when she was not friends with him, that she would break with him, and try to make a conquest of the beautiful gentleman sent from Paris by Lord Rockalpine.

Courtney Claverhouse had heard a good deal about the De Veres, their pride, their poverty, the ball, and the shifts they were put to, to appear at it. While at Oldborough, wherever he was, he made himself pleasant and talked sociably. A slight sprain had made him consult

Mr. Smith, (one of the Oldborough surgeons,) who invited him to dinner.

At this dinner he met the Stubbses, and heard all the spiteful *on dits* about the De Veres, and their toilette, and equipage for the Oldborough ball. Much disgusted at heart, he still drew out the malicious Jemima Stubbs and the envious Theodosia Smith; and before he quitted the odious set, he knew all about the dye, the mixture to clean gloves, the old coach, the farmer's horses, and the probability of the proud old gal catching a *spill*, as Smily Stubbs called it.

Courtney Claverhouse made a most favourable impression on the Oldborough vulgarities. Miss Theodosia Smith fell miserably in love with him; and Miss Jemima Stubbs, recalling his polite attentions, black eyes, and white teeth, hoped he was not "gay," and sighed to meet him again.

They all felt certain he was charmed with them, with Oldborough, with the round game he had played at commerce with three inter-

minable lives, beginning at seven P.M., and ending at two in the morning by a boisterous game of fright, and at which united bores he had lost fifteen shillings—consoled by Mrs. Smith's assuring him that "gentlemen who were unlucky at cards were sure to be fortunate in marriage."

And all the wearisome honours of that protracted martyrdom had produced but one satisfactory result in his opinion, namely, the knowledge it had given him of many minute circumstances connected with the very people to see whom he had visited Oldborough, and to hear about whom he had doomed himself to sit from seven P.M. to two A.M., playing commerce in the company of the professional vulgarities of a country town.

\* \* \* \* \*

Cecile soon discovered, on her return from the farm, that Dudley had been invited. Her mother spoke of it naturally, and regretted his

absence, saying, "I regret more than ever now, that Dudley Harcourt ever came to De Vere at all; but as he is here, and is almost one of ourselves, I wish he could have met my uncle's friend."

Cecile said nothing; but in cross-examining Amy, she soon found out that Mr. Harcourt was engaged to dine at "the Coxes." To be able to dine out at all, when at war with her, showed, in her opinion, great indifference and contempt. To dine there, after having been seen inviting Eveline and Ferdinand Coxe into his garden, looked very much as if he could easily transfer his affections to that meek, Madonna-faced Eveline, who looked up to him as a saint.

A burning jealousy now seemed to parch Cecile's heart. It was a wretched, tearful, miserable feeling! It contracted her throat, as a spasm might have done. It made her feel reckless, defiant, miserable, almost mad, and yet outwardly gay, sportive, joyous! Her eyes sparkled, her cheeks glowed, her bosom throbbed.

She looked unusually brilliant in beauty and animated in manner, when Mr. Courtney Claverhouse was shown into the little boudoir which did duty for the drawing-room on this occasion.

While expecting the guest, Cecile had taken up her guitar, that guitar which she had played with such well-assumed nonchalance the last time she had seen her lover, and while he was gazing at her with pale cheeks and tearful eyes.

As Courtney Claverhouse entered the hall, he heard Cecile playing a "Spanish Retreat" with great taste and skill. Like most men educated abroad, Courtenay was accomplished. He sketched with taste, sung charmingly, played the guitar to perfection, and danced admirably.

It was some time before dinner was ready—punctuality in such cases requires many servants, and the habit of giving dinners. Mrs. De Vere and Amy were busy "lending a helping hand," and Cecile had to amuse Mr. Claverhouse. The time, long as it really was, seemed very short, for Mr. Claverhouse undertook to teach Cecile

some very pretty waltzes and barcarolles, and from that they got to a song, and from a song to a duet.

Their voices harmonised admirably ; as the sounds floated down the stairs, and met the mother's ear, she sighed again to think that Cecile was engaged, and sent Amy to join the singers, and take a part in a glee.

Claverhouse was not at all glad to have the charming *tête-à-tête* broken in upon. He drew suddenly farther from Cecile's chair, and a slight contraction of the brow and compression of the lip, might have suggested that he had a temper that ill-brooked anything, not in accordance with his wishes. Cecile did not notice the change—she was not in love with him ; had it been her Dudley, she would have perceived it in a moment. She went on gaily playing to Amy the airs she had just learnt from Courtney, and was still thus engaged when Mrs. De Vere entered the room.

The dinner went off very well ; owing to Amy's good advice, they had not attempted too much.



The cloth was laid in the library. The small, but elegant repast did great credit to Mrs. Jiles and "cook." The wine was some of De Vere's best, and better could not be.

Mrs. De Vere was so lively, hospitable, witty and captivating, that her daughters, who had always seen her gloomy and silent in company, no longer wondered at the conquests she had made in her youth, and for the first time fully understood Lord Bagshot's infatuation, and poor Papa's devotion during the long ago.

Mr. Claverhouse kindly satisfied Mrs. De Vere's anxiety about every particular connected with her uncle and his family. He told her that Lord Rockalpine's brother had married, had lost his wife (by whom he had two children, both boys), and that, as he had an unfortunate attachment to a young and pretty person, who had been a governess, and about whom there had been some scandal, it was much to be feared he would never marry again, but that he thought it very likely some of the many attacks

made on the heart, or rather the coronet, of his old friend, Lord Rockalpine, might take effect, and that the older he grew, the feebler his resistance to woman and to wedlock became.

Mrs. De Vere never saw a newspaper, and her own peerage was of ancient date. She did not know that her uncle, the Hon. Loftus Lorraine, was married, and had children ! still less had it even struck her, that Lord Rockalpine, so confirmed a bachelor, would ever think of matrimony.

After she had gilded the dreary present by a fancy dream of a not impossible future—not impossible then, but highly improbable now—she had thought that if both her uncles died, *sine prole* (her father had long been dead), she was herself the next heir to title and estates ; but with two sons of her uncle Loftus, that uncle himself and hale and “like to live” (not the invalid she had known him), and the Earl himself become a marrying man, it was madness

to dream of the succession for herself or her children.

Often and often had she remembered, with pride and joy, that the title and estates descended to heirs general, and that, were both her uncles to die without issue, she herself would, in her own right, be Countess of Rockalpine.

Every word Mr. Claverhouse said, made this vision seem more baseless, and this hope more ridiculous.

She began to rejoice that Cecile *was* engaged to a good man of ancient family, who could maintain her in modest comfort, and fervently did she wish that the fascinating stranger would address himself more frequently to Amy, and not to appear to have eyes and ears only for the brilliant, but affianced Cecile.

To the surprise of the whole party before Courtney Claverhouse left Court De Vere, a slow and stately step was heard descending the stairs; Mrs. De Vere's cheeks flushed, the girls started up, exclaiming "Papa!" the door was

thrown open very slowly, and Mr. De Vere stood before them, a light in his hand, and one in his eye, too, of a lurid and unsteady nature, which his wife and daughters shuddered to behold.

Courtney Claverhouse was much too well bred to smile, or betray a symptom of mirth or surprise, although the figure before him would have unlocked the risible muscles of most men. But among the *on dits* circulated at Oldborough concerning "the ruined family," was one that Mr. De Vere was insane; now, no allusion to this had been made by Courtney, or to him, during his brief stay with the De Vere family, but it occurred to his mind, directly he saw Mrs. De Vere change colour, and heard the girls, with such dismay, exclaim, "Papa!" Still more forcibly did it recur to him, when the door was flung open, and Reginald De Vere stood before him.

But Mr. De Vere was not insane, he was only what is vulgarly called, "cracked," that he was on most points, but on the subject of family

pride he was a confirmed monomaniac. And no wonder. He had lived for twenty years at Court De Vere, in total seclusion, 'with nothing to do, nothing to occupy his head or hands, no amusement or interest in the Present, no hope or prospect for the Future, nothing, in short, but "the Past" to dwell upon and to glory in.

Mrs. De Vere was as full of family pride as himself, but she was a wife—a mother. She had a woman's active temperament, maternal instincts, and industrious habits—a wife and mother must live in the Present. No one goes mad who lives in the actual, matter-of-fact, common-place Present, while those who live only in the Future or the Past, generally do become more or less insane.

By dwelling in that fairy land, the Future, they allow a pleasing, dreamy, fanciful insanity to grow upon their minds; while, by brooding for ever over that great churchyard, the Past, "melancholy" soon "marks them for her own."

There is always something of a ghastly ludi-

crocity, perhaps, but ludicrous still, in madness, even in what is called melancholy madness, and where pride has disturbed that exact mental balance on which sanity depends, many ridiculous contrasts are the result.

Mr. De Vere, long before his eccentricities became so marked as to give rise to the report of his insanity, had contracted that habit, common to the idle and recluses, of occupying and tormenting himself about his own health—he was, as Mrs. De Vere had said, a hypochondriac.

As he had no money to throw away on doctors, and was much too proud to receive advice gratis, he took to doctoring himself. He tried one system after another (all old and obsolete), for no new book of medicine found its way to Court De Vere—the most modern work in his medical library was “Buchan,” whom he looked upon as a very recent authority.

Mr. De Vere was never quiet, unless he was trying some new system—experimentalising in

some way—and by dint of these systems and experiments, he had ruined an Herculean constitution, and brought on a premature old age. Genealogy and medicine were his only studies—he weakened his body by drugs, depletion, blisters, seatons—in short, by whatever remedies he found recommended for diseases which he fancied he suffered from; and he impaired his mind and inflamed his brain, by dwelling on nothing but the by-gone glories of the De Veres.

He was surrounded by histories of this once puissant family, by monuments, records, and relics of their importance; their armorial bearings, their genealogical tree, their pedigree, their old family portraits, armour and jewels, plate and china, were ever before his eyes. His mind, never very expansive or noble, contracted itself so as scarcely to admit of more than two objects of interest,—family pride and bodily health.

He had long been engaged (for even *he* found it impossible to exist without any occupation at all) in a voluminous, inflated, pompous,



weak, and most ill-written tautological "History of the De Vere Family." He had been engaged upon it for many years, but it was not advanced even midway, for he made many rough copies, and his fair and final one was written on vellum, and in a hand closely resembling print. For the smallest blot, error, mistake or malformation of a letter, a whole page was cancelled; and as the History done, his occupation would be gone, Mrs. and the Misses De Veres, who dreaded having him on their hands, hoped the subject never would be exhausted.

It was a curious thing, that, although Mrs. De Vere, granddaughter of one of our noblest and most ancient Peers, was indisputably of a more illustrious family than his own, he took no pride in her ancestry, and attached no importance to deeds and achievements that had become part of our national history. There was no room in his narrow, ill-arranged mind for more than his own family pride, and his own bodily symptoms, his ruined family, and his ruined constitution!

And yet the De Veres had always been a knightly, but never a noble house! Certainly they had been of great local importance at one time, and in villages ten miles round, there were still little cosy country inns, called the "De Vere Arms," and relics of their importance and wealth far and wide. But they had never been more than a great county family; and yet Reginald De Vere, the last of the race, had crazed his weak mind by dwelling and brooding on their bygone grandeur, and writing their history.

He was subject, poor fellow, to fits of intense gloom, deep dejection, violent, furious passion, and childlike fretfulness about trifles. His habit of quacking himself had so weakened his nerves, that he, who so gloried in the ancient valour of the De Veres, was an arrant coward himself. But in a general way he was placid, somewhat pompous, and very condescending.

As his youth had been spent at Court as a page of honour, and as he went thence into the Guards, and he had always moved in the best

society, he was polite and courteous. And as Courtney Claverhouse rose to return his bow, and accept his proffered hand, he thought him a perfect specimen of the gentleman of *La vieille Cour*.

This effect was heightened by his being arrayed in a Court dress, sword, bag, *solitaire*, and all etceteras, and armed with a *chapeau bras*. The effect of this costume was, of course, to make him appear to Courtney to be stark staring mad; but it was not by any means so great an evidence of insanity as it appeared to be.

The fact was, when Mrs. De Vere saw him, after he had shaved off all his hair, whiskers, eyebrows, and moustachios, having found in an old treatise that "the human hayre sucketh up the strengthe of manne's bodie, and should be removed entirelie;" he sounded her upon the subject of an interview with Mr. Claverhouse; and she, dreading that a gentleman sent by her uncle, evidently as a suitor to one of her daughters, should perceive symptoms of insanity

in their father, at the very outset of the acquaintance, urged him by no means to show himself to any stranger so disfigured and disguised !

Now it is remarkable, in all people at all mentally afflicted, that few things seem impossible to them. Difficulties that would entirely deter the sane man, seem no obstacles to the insane.

Mr. De Vere said nothing ; but he at once formed his plan. He was very sly, that is another peculiarity of mental aberration, and Mrs. De Vere, who knew him well, suspecting something from his apparent docility, and remarking an expression in his eye that made her doubt his sincerity, to make security doubly sure, locked the wardrobe containing all his wearable clothes, and pocketed the key. He was in a very old damask wrapper, and velvet nightcap while she was speaking to him, and knowing him to be the slave of punctilio and etiquette, she felt certain he would not appear before a stranger of distinction in such a *déshabille*. She therefore felt quite safe with regard to him, and he saw that

she did so, and she was no sooner gone than he began to manufacture for himself a pair of ferocious false eyebrows and moustachios, out of an old lynx boa, and to supply the place of the hair he had shaved off by a shaggy scalp of the same. This extraordinary undertaking was very hard to accomplish ; it required a great deal of skill, patience, and time, and also a very strong cement which he had to concoct for the purpose. The result was perfectly satisfactory to himself ; but the effect unutterably ludicrous to the beholders.

He was well aware that Mrs. De Vere had locked up his wardrobe, and he understood why ; but he remembered, with an inward chuckle, several old portmanteaus, full of forgotten Court suits under his bed, and on the top of his wardrobe.

He quietly selected and aired all he required. When his dinner was brought to him by the old housemaid, this court suit was carefully concealed ; but his sham eyebrows, moustachios, and toupé, manufactured out of the old lynx boa,

him look so strange, wild, and ludicrously fierce, that in order not to excite his irascible temper by laughing aloud, she hastily put down his dinner-tray before him, and darted down stairs, holding her sides, and choking with suppressed cachination as she went.

Mrs. De Vere augured no evil from Bridget's account of her master's pilatory triumphs. She felt safe in the consciousness of possessing the key of the wardrobe, and thus Mr. De Vere had the field to himself, and contrived the surprise which, though a pleasant one to the guest to whom it afforded many a good laugh when he was alone, was fraught with distress to the wife and daughters of the unfortunate gentleman !

He came in then with his shaggy black eyebrows, pensile moustachios, and shaggy toupé, a very old Peerage in his hand, and a *chapeau bras* under his arm.

He was extremely courteous and condescending to Courtney Claverhouse, and rather authoritative and short with his wife and children.



“I am but a poor wreck, Mr. Claverhouse,” he said, “a perfect martyr to almost every ill that flesh is heir to; but I do not wish to fail in that hospitality for which the De Veres have always been renowned, and therefore I have made an effort to welcome you in person to Court De Vere. While you are in this neighbourhood, I hope you will make my house your head quarters. With regard to the shooting, which, I hear from Mrs. De Vere, is your chief attraction here, (Claverhouse shot a meaning glance at Cecile, who blushed and looked down), I hope you will consider yourself empowered by me to shoot all over the country for five miles round. I am Lord of the Manor, sir, and have sole right to the shooting. An upstart huckster, sir, from Fish Street Hill, one Coxe, who has built a place on my land, modern and cockney as himself, may give you some trouble, if you happen to come upon what he impudently calls ‘his preserves;’ but I advise you, sir, to knock him down, as I should do in such a case—him, his son, his



gamekeeper, or whoever the vulgar cit may send out against you. This done, fling him this card, (here he gave him an old yellow card engraved thirty years before), tell him the master of Court De Vere has given you the right to shoot all over his manor, and refer him to me !”

“ I am exceedingly obliged to you, sir,” said Courtney with gentle deference. “ I promise myself some capital shooting, armed with this pass (putting the card in his *porte monnaie*,) and I only wish your health permitted you to join in a sport, of which the enjoyment would be doubled, if shared with you.”

“ I wish it did ; but, as Mrs. De Vere will tell you, I seldom leave my room.”

“ Had you not better return to it at once ?” said Mrs. De Vere, who was keenly alive to the extraordinary and insane effect of her husband’s whole appearance and manner.

“ No, I thank you, my love ! I shall finish the evening in this pleasant company—Cecile give us a song !”

Cecile hesitated and looked at her mother.

"Did you hear me, girl?" almost shrieked Mr. De Vere, his eyes flashing fire under the shaggy lynx eyebrows, one of which had got perched awry over his flashing, angry, blood-shot eye.

"Yes, Papa!" said Cecile trembling; "what shall it be? Italian?"

"No, nothing modern or new-fangled. One of Moore's melodies. 'The harp that once through Tara's Halls.'"

Cecile sang that exquisite melody with plaintive sweetness. The tears ran down her father's hollow cheeks.

"Mr. Courtney Claverhouse sings, Papa," said Amy, afraid her time was coming.

"Do oblige us," said Mrs. De Vere.

"I should be glad to hear you, sir," said Mr. De Vere, in a patronizing tone.

"I know nothing but what you will, I fear, consider too modern; but I will venture on a song of which, I think, you will approve the sentiment as much as I do."

He then sung, with great spirit and expression,

“The fine old English gentleman,  
All of the olden time.”

Mr. De Vere was enchanted. He joined in the chorus, sharply ordered his wife and daughters to do the same, and vociferously applauded the song and the singer. Courtney then rose to go, but Mr. De Vere insisted on his wife's producing some very choice old liqueurs and a supper tray well covered. To this little impromptu repast he paid ample homage himself, having been too full of his preparations, when his dinner was brought him, to touch anything.

He afterwards produced the Peerage, in order to trace out exactly what branch of the Claverhouse family his guest belonged to. They puzzled over the complicated genealogy of the family a long time; and Mr. De Vere was so pleased with his guest's patience, deference, and attention, that he promised, on some future occasion, to show him his “History of the De Vere family,” and read him part of it.

Courtney at length effected his escape, but it was past one in the morning when he reached his lodgings at the Cottage.

He was no sooner gone than Mr. De Vere, taking up his candle, said, "I shall not easily forgive or forget, Madam, your unworthy manœuvre to prevent my doing the honours of my own house, nor the unwarrantable liberty you have taken with me and my property. You take a vast deal too much upon yourself, Madam, and so do your daughters. My long illness, and consequent seclusion, have given you a power you administer very ill. But I feel better, Madam, to-night than I have done for years, and I hope to be able to come down to breakfast to-morrow, and to resume the reins of government here!"

So saying, with a slow and stately step he re-ascended the wide, old, oaken staircase and returned to his room.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## CROSSED IN LOVE.

POOR Mr. De Vere! his was an idle boast—a delusive hope! The old court suit in which he had figured before Courtney Claverhouse was very damp, and his frame, rendered very susceptible of cold, by constant doses of calomel and nitre, was easily affected. A violent attack of rheumatic gout was the result of his *escapade*.

Long days and nights of nursing were entailed on Mrs. De Vere; and she had in the end good cause to repent of what had seemed to her at the time so clever a manœuvre and well contrived a counterplot, that of locking up her husband's

wardrobe. Somehow or other, in the end, a curse seems to light upon all plotting and manœuvring, and in this case Mrs. De Vere felt that it had done so. Her husband was a very obstinate, ungrateful, unmanageable patient, and the task of nursing him was a very thankless one.

Meantime Courtney wisely forbore to shoot, except where he was certain of not having his right challenged ; but shooting was become a very secondary object with him. Drawing, reading, painting, singing, and practising the guitar with Cecile and Amy, took up the greater part of his time, and of theirs. Mr. Harcourt was gone away for a few days, and a college friend, very shy, reserved, and studious, was performing his duties for him. Cecile was not at ease. She dared not look within, but she was apparently in very high spirits. Her happy, even, serenity was gone ; but a brilliant, sportive mirth seemed to have supplied its place ! It could not have been very real, but it was admirably simulated ! No—it could not have been real ; for

directly she was alone, all semblance of gaiety forsook her, and large tears dimmed her sparkling eyes, and stole over her flushed cheeks.

Amy continued to attend the daily service, to visit the poor, the sick, and to teach in the schools; but Cecile had always some plausible excuse ready.

She fancied that Dudley Harcourt would look upon her return to these duties as an attempt, perhaps a vain one (oh! how her proud heart throbbed at the thought!), to recover his favour and renew their engagement. The pride of both her parents—the worldly, foolish, fatal pride of the houses of De Vere and Lorraine—was blent in the blue veins that meandered through the snowdrop skin of this beautiful but mistaken girl. She wanted to show her lover that he had *no* power over her—and she proved that he had power enough to make her neglect her duties and offend her God!

Among the invalid poor whom it had been the constant occupation of Dudley, Cecile, and



Amy to visit, to comfort, to read to, and to pray with, was a very pretty girl, exactly of Cecile's age, and who was in a consumption. Her story was a very touching and a very simple one. She had been *crossed in love*, as the country people say. She had loved a young man, who had loved her well enough to offer to marry her; but when she refused to leave her widowed mother, and go with him to his native place, many miles away, he taxed her with indifference, left her in anger, and married in pique a bold, forward, handsome woman, who had often tried to win him away from poor Rose Moss.

Rose had loved him with all her heart, but she was a good and dutiful child. However, in total ignorance of the deadly anger and revenge her refusal had awakened, and of the unworthy rivalry of the bold, brunette beauty, Betty Bloomfield, barmaid at the village inn, the "De Vere Arms," she had formed a plan, and her mother had consented to it, although reminding her the while, "that old trees ill bear transplanting." It

was to remove, with all their little belongings, to Mark's own village, and settle her mother in a little cottage there, as mistress of a dame-school, for which she had ascertained there was an opening, and which had always been her mother's occupation.

The humble, loving letter in which this proposal was couched was delivered to Mark Heather just as he had fixed the day for his wedding with Betty Bloomfield.

Poor Rose received not only a cold, short, decisive note from Mark, but a very insulting, taunting, triumphant letter from the bride elect. She was heart-broken. Not only she had lost him, but she knew he could not be happy with such a bold, thriftless coquette as Betty Bloomfield, the barmaid.

The wedding took place. The gay peal of the marriage bells was the knell of Rose's peace. She had always been delicate, but as a happy wife she might have lived long. Tears soon ripen the seeds of disease ; and, though she tried

hard to struggle with her own sorrow, when she heard Mark Heather was wretched in his ill-assorted union, she fretted, silently but incessantly. Bold Betty had by her coquetry got him into a fight. He was always passionate, and prone to jealousy. A barmaid was no fit match for such a man, when even timid, shy, retiring Rose had sometimes excited his ready wrath and watchful jealousy. He had dealt his adversary an unlucky blow. The poor wretch had died; and Mark had been found guilty of manslaughter, and imprisoned. Rose was thinking for ever, night and day, of Mark, in his lonely prison, with blood on his hands and a brother's death on his soul; and, weakened by disease, she traced it all to her first rejection of his hand, and self-reproach increased the agony of her spirit and the fever of her blood.

She was in the greatest mental anguish and bodily pain when Dudley Harcourt became Vicar of De Vere. He visited all the poor, and he soon found out Rose and her sorrows. By

degrees he got her to tell him her whole sad tale of love and sorrow. He pitied her deeply. He saw little to blame where she saw so much, and he told her so. She knew that her disease was a fatal one. She had lost two aunts and three sisters in consumption ; her father, and an only brother, too, had died in that same thatched cottage of that terrible complaint, and they were all buried in the little churchyard, to which she felt and knew she was hastening. Dudley Harcourt gave her no false hopes of recovery. He saw that in all human probability she must die, and he tried to prepare her for death. He made her see her Saviour's hand in all that had befallen her, and brought her to believe her loss of earthly happiness with Mark was gain, if it might secure her heavenly inheritance.

He brought Cecile and Amy, who had known her, and noticed her when they were all little romping girls together, to sit by her, read to her, talk to her, and pray with her ; with the instinctive foresight of the dying, she soon dis-

covered that Cecile and Dudley were lovers, and she had loved so wildly and so well herself, that every tale of true love was deeply interesting to her, whether acted or read.

All that gentle Christian women could do to cheer, to comfort, and to benefit a suffering sister, was done by Cecile and Amy De Vere, under the judicious guidance of their young and zealous pastor.

They generally saw poor Rose twice or thrice a week, and she looked forward to their visit as to a sort of festival.

However ill and feverish, however oppressed her breathing, or acute the pain in her side, she would have her room set nicely in order, by the good old dame, her mother ; would have a clean hearth, with a good fire in winter, and fresh evergreens in summer. Her best coverlid, and clean pillow case, a snow-white little net cap with its neatly quilled border over her softly braided chesnut hair, and a soft white shawl over her clean and frilled dimity bed gown.

This was latterly, when her disease had made such strides that she could not rise, as she had been wont to do, when first they knew her ; to sit in her high-backed chair by the fire or the window as the weather rendered pleasant.

But, up or in bed, the little room was, as the old dame said, " as neat as print ;" a little round old black mahogany table, drawn close to her chair or bed—a sweet nosegay, of fresh gathered flowers on it—her Bible—her Christian Year—a few other religious works, her sewing and her knitting. No speck of dust on carpet, old bureau, tables or chairs. A pretty diamond-paned lattice, festooned with monthly roses, jasmine, and clematis, with a little muslin blind, through which you looked on the small cottage garden, once Rose's pride and occupation, and which in happier days had been laid out by Mark Heather.

As Rose lay in bed she could see the little harbour they had contrived together, the bee



hives he had given her, the flower beds he had laid out and filled with plants.

Once this prospect maddened her ; now she could gaze upon it through soft tears of a not unbearable regret. Dudley Harcourt had promised her, when Mark left prison, to seek him out, and try to befriend him, and awaken him to the only solace left for him.

The wretched woman he had married had absconded with a former lover, taking all Mark's little property with her ! Rose knew Mark would be a desolate outcast, a lost sheep, but she knew, too, that Dudley could bring him home to the fold of the true Shepherd, as he had done herself ! With the hope of comforting him, she wrote daily some texts that seemed to her peculiarly impressive, some comments on them, some pious thought or little prayer in a book Dudley Harcourt had given her for the purpose. It was to be Rose's legacy to Mark, and was to be given him by Dudley Harcourt ; and as Rose thought of all the young Vicar had been to her,



and would probably be to Mark, she learnt to gaze without agony on the bower Mark had helped her to plant; for she thought, "perhaps we may yet wander hand in hand through immortal bowers, perhaps meet, where sorrow, sin, and death can never part us!"

Rose was much attached to both the sisters, but in her heart she loved Cecile best; she had made Cecile promise, that if it were possible, she would be with her when she died.

During the estrangement of Cecile and Dudley, the former had not once been to see poor Rose, until he went away for a few days. Dudley Harcourt had been more than usually attentive to the suffering girl, and had visited her every day; Amy, too, had not relaxed in her attentions, but rather the reverse, still, the wistful eye, the start when a step was heard, and the slowly gathering tear proved that Rose was pining to gaze on the beautiful face of the beloved, absent Cecile.

Amy made what excuses she could for her

sister, but Rose felt they were only excuses; she was very quick—people with her disease generally are. She felt sure, as she marked Mr. Dudley Harcourt's somewhat constrained manner with Amy, and how carefully he avoided all mention of Cecile—she felt certain there was something wrong, a misunderstanding—perhaps a quarrel.

She had resolved to summon courage to speak to the young Vicar himself on the subject, and warn him of the danger of Lovers' Quarrels; when, instead of his tall form, pale classic face, and light waving hair, she saw by her bedside, the dark eyes, black hair, and marked features of Mr. Mowbray, his substitute; and though she listened reverently while he prayed and read, she did not open her heart in the least to him; and when he was gone, she wept bitterly.—

However, Cecile, although so sinfully proud, was not hard-hearted or faithless. She had not forgotten poor Rose or her sufferings, but she had feared, had she visited her cottage while

Dudley Harcourt was attending her, it might seem to him as if she sought him, and courted a reconciliation ; and to this fear she sacrificed her duty to Rose, as she had done her duty to God !

But when once she knew that Dudley Harcourt was away, and would not return till the second Sunday from that one then passing away so gaily in the enlivening presence of Courtney Claverhouse, she resolved to go and see Rose— She required no urging from Amy then. Amy had constantly reminded her how much Rose longed and even pined to see her ; but in vain ! while there was a chance of her meeting Dudley by Rose's bed-side, and of his misconstruing her presence there !

## CHAPTER XIV.

## A FELLOW-FEELING.

CECILE resolved to go and see Rose Moss—and so greatly was she changed from the happy confiding Cecile she had been before her quarrel with Dudley, that she meant to go alone, and to keep her visit a secret from Amy! . . . Amy was no longer as dear as she had been to Cecile, for Amy's countenance and manner betrayed, in spite of herself, the disapprobation she felt of her sister's unwise determination to show her indifference to Dudley Harcourt, by neglecting the duties he had taught and exhorted her to fulfil. Nor could Amy, while the engagement was not

formally broken off, approve of the growing intimacy between Cecile and Courtney Claverhouse, and the pains her sister took to please and subdue him, both by setting off her beauty, and showing off her accomplishments. Cecile was far too proud and vain to tolerate this sort of silent rebuke in one who had always looked up to her, and admired her as her superior, not merely in beauty and talent, but in wisdom and virtue. Cecile was two years older than Amy, and never before having been tried in the balance, had never before been found wanting.

Amy now, for the first time, began to question that mental and moral superiority which she had taken on trust.

Cecile saw that she did so, and this was a new cause of anger against Dudley. It is very unpleasant to see a fond *confidante*, who had never found a fault, or scarcely ever hazarded a contrary opinion, turned all at once into an investigator and a censor; and though poor Amy did not speak her disapprobation, her looks and

manner almost unconsciously to herself, were eloquent of surprise, disapprobation, and distress !

Cecile grew reserved, angry, and haughty with Amy, and as if to show her contempt of a judgment that *could* condemn her and side with Dudley, she ceased even to make excuses for neglecting the duties, once such a bond of union between the sisters, and assuming a gaiety she was far from feeling, appeared to admire Courtney Claverhouse far more than she really did, for still in the secret and virgin recesses of her proud and rebel heart one idol was enshrined, and that idol was her first, her only love, her once affianced husband ! Yes still, (although she would not own it even to herself), one whispered word of his would have had a power over her which the most passionate protestations of Courtney Claverhouse could never acquire ! It was while she was teaching in the village school, and Courtney, hoping Cecile would keep him company, was sketching in the library, that she, in her garden hat and

cloak, (hastily snatched from the hall table,) gently opened the door, and furtively sped through the shrubbery, up the lane, and across the fields, to the cottage of poor Rose Moss.

The poor girl was a trifle better—one of those deceptive improvements, which, in consumption, so often excite hope, as if merely to make the ultimate despair more terrible. Her room was arranged as if she expected a visitor; yet Cecile had given no notice of her intention of calling on her. Rose was looking very transparent and pretty. She was decidedly thinner than when Cecile had seen her last, but a bright pink flush gave lustre to her large violet eyes, and a delusive appearance of health to her general appearance. Her delight at seeing Cecile was extreme; weak from long illness, she could not control the evidence of her emotions, and when she gasped forth her thanks, and the large tears would gush forth, and the quick sobs choked her utterance, Cecile felt a pang of keen self-reproach that she had so long and so selfishly withheld so great a



pleasure as her visit, evidently was, from one whose earthly joys must be so few in number !

Moss Rose, as the Misses De Vere always called her, in earlier days, transposing her pretty name, in recognition of the strong resemblance her modest beauty gave her, to the sweetest flower of earth—Moss Rose, we say, evidently expected a visitor. Her mother having arranged the little room in the prettiest and neatest order possible, and arrayed Moss Rose in her clean net cap and her white dimity bedgown, was gone to market. Cecile de Vere was very kind ; but there was a pre-occupied reserve in her manner which Moss Rose had never seen there before. She seemed anxious to appear in very high spirits, and was restless and excited ; but Moss Rose, who by her own breaking heart knew how to judge of another's, felt that Cecile's gaiety was forced, assumed, and suspected that she was miserable. It seemed to her that Cecile laughed in order not to weep.

Moss Rose felt as certain as if Cecile had con-

fessed it, that a Lover's Quarrel was the cause of the undisguised anguish she had read on Dudley Harcourt's pale cheek when he had paid her latterly a hurried visit, and that Cecile's ill-concealed disquiet arose from the same cause. Long before the final difference which had destroyed them both, Moss Rose and her "sweetheart" had been silly enough to run the risk of a Lover's Quarrel, and well poor Rose knew every symptom that Cecile quite unconsciously, and in spite of herself, betrayed.

Now Rose was rather in awe of the proud young Cecile; had it been little Amy, she would have spoken out, have tried, humble as she was, to act the part—(blessed as we know of God,) the part of a Peace Maker.

She saw two young beings, at heart devoted to each other, casting away the sweetest gift of Heaven, that pearl of purity true love, for a few careless, or at worst angry words. Not daring to approach the subject directly, she said, taking up a little tale that had been lent her, called

“Love and Pride,” “Have you read this little story, Miss?”

“No,” answered Cecile, abstractedly pulling a beautiful monthly rose to pieces as she spoke, “what is it about?”

“It’s called ‘Love and Pride’, Miss,” said Rose, with a faltering voice, the result of her consciousness of Cecile’s state of mind!

Cecile coloured violently, and sudden anger flashed from her eyes, and curled her proud and beautiful lip as she said, “‘Love and Pride!’ I hope, Rose, if the love is on the lady’s side, the pride is too; a woman who loves, needs all the pride she can muster to prevent the man she has raised to power, from using it to crush her, or at least to humble her to the dust.”

“Ah, Miss! Of course you know best, and I only speak from my own poor heart, not from great and learned writers and a grand education like you, Miss! But I fancy, if girls could but think so, humility would stand them in more stead than pride. I only wish when I was well

and happy, and blest with the love of a true heart, and enjoying the rapture of loving with all my own—for you know that is a great delight, Miss!—I wish that I had not been so exacting and so tetchy and proud, and ready to take offence!—that's not the way a poor, erring girl should take with a proud, headstrong creature like man. Before and after marriage, she should remember a civil answer turns away wrath, and we should be ready to forgive, seeing we have much to be forgiven—at least poor girls have, Miss! Oh, how often, as I lie on this bed, my death-bed, Miss—for you'll see I sha'n't last much longer—and gaze on the past as on a great map, I see what a much better course I might have taken. I oughtn't to have let Mark leave me in anger. I ought not to have refused to go where he went. That was not like the holy women of old. And now I'm dying of a broken heart, and he's lying in prison with a fellow-creature's blood on a hand I might have kept free from sin, had I held it in my own, as a loving maid should the hand

of him who loves her well enough to make her the wife of his bosom and the partner of his life. I never said a cold, a haughty, or a cruel word to him, that it has not come back to me in the night watches, and I could have shrieked in my vain remorse, but for the fear of frightening Mother !”

“ Moss Rose !” said Cecile, “ in long illnesses people take very morbid views of their past conduct. My opinion is, you showed too little spirit, instead of too much. Had you exercised that dominion over your intended which every woman ought to exercise, he would have settled where you chose—he would not have wished or attempted to part you from your mother ; but you accustomed him to have his own way, and directly you disputed his will, he, like a spoilt boy, (spoilt by you), broke the toy he had so longed for—your heart !”

“ Oh, Miss !” cried Rose, “ if you had pondered on these things as I have, you would see matters in a different light. You would try to

root out pride and cultivate humility. You would think that there is nothing, no nothing in woman's life to compare in value with that true love which I believe she never feels or inspires more than once. Pride is of little use to a broken heart, and is a poor comforter to a lonely, blighted creature."

"Proper pride," said Cecile, "helps a woman who has bestowed her affections rashly on one unworthy of them, to conceal the anguish of her disappointment from the tyrant her devotion has empowered to trample on her. . . . But enough of this—let us speak of other things. You are certainly better, dear Moss Rose. If we can but nurse you through the winter, and it prove as mild as the last, we may see you yet at Court De Vere again, to keep my birth-day on the 1st of June, as in the dear old times."

"Ah, Miss Cecile," replied Rose, "before the first snow whitens the ground I shall be at rest—under the old yew-tree we used

so to love; those translucent ruby berries I have so often picked up, will lie on my grave, and the moon-beams will light up the words—

‘ Here lie the mortal remains of

ROSE MOSS,

Who died of a broken heart, in the nineteenth  
year of her age.’

But, Miss Cecile, should it prove so, though I see you do not believe it, will you be with me in that awful hour? I have always loved you so! more, far more than I have ever dared to tell you. You once promised me you would be with me in my last moments,—it will be such a blessing to Mother, such a solace to me!—say you will.”

“ If possible I will, dear Rose! But I hear a horse’s hoofs in the lane—some one is tying a pony to your gate. Do you expect the clergyman? Mr.—I forget his name—Mowbray, is it not?”

“ I *do* expect a clergyman,” faltered Moss



Rose, turning vermillion with excitement, and the consciousness of an innocent desire to bring the lovers together, while tears — the large, ready crystal tears which in great debility we shed so freely, welled up into her lustrous eyes.

The truth flashed across Cecile's mind in a moment, and her evil genius, in the shape of pride, roused her at once to resist and circumvent a plan that might have saved her much misery, and restored her to that perfect, balmy peace she had known, while affianced to one she still loved, "not wisely, but too well."

"It is Mr. Dudley Harcourt," she said, half angrily, to poor Moss Rose, who, with her thin, almost transparent fingers, was grasping the beautiful white hand (so dimpled, soft, and at the tips of the fingers and in the palm so delicately pink) of the agitated Cecile.

"Do not detain me, Rose! I have reasons for not choosing to meet him."

“ Oh, Miss Cecile, if you have quarrelled, you have every reason for wishing to meet him ; how else can you make it up ? ”

“ Make it up ! ” said Cecile, her eyes flashing, and hastily closing the Bible where she had opened it, to read to Rose our Saviour's sermon on the mount — “ Make it up ! You do not know what you propose, — neither he nor I wish it.”

“ Oh, Miss, I am sure he does. He never hears your name mentioned without changing colour, nor sees anything you have given me without the tears coming into his eyes. Oh, stay, Miss ! do stay, and make it up here. The bedside of one dying as I am, crossed in love, is the very place to sacrifice pride and resentment for the sake of true love.”

But Cecile tore her hand away. She knew there was a back way out of the little cottage ; and while Dudley Harcourt, having secured his pony to the gate-post, knocked twice, and then gently lifted the latch of the cottage door, Cecile

slipped out at the back entrance, and sped like one pursued across the now neglected, but once nicely-kept kitchen garden, and hurried along until she reached a plantation which adjoined the grounds of Court De Vere.

## CHAPTER XV.

## MISCONSTRUCTION.

COURTNEY CLAVERHOUSE remained about an hour painting in the library, and expecting Cecile's return. When he found she did not come, he grew weary of his occupation, and resolved to stroll out with his gun.

In the hall he met Mabel, who was bringing home some needlework, and from her he learned, not only that Cecile was gone to visit Moss Rose, but that Mr. Dudley Harcourt had been seen in the village, and was probably bound for the same abode.

Courtney's very handsome black brows were

contracted by this intelligence, and the clear olive of his complexion was flushed with an angry crimson. Both he and Mabel knew perfectly well how it was with the lovers, and both dreaded a meeting between them; for where hearts are still true, a meeting generally leads to a reconciliation. . . . Mabel sincerely thought her young lady might do a great deal better, and that the noble, pleasant, handsome young gentleman sent by Lord Rockalpine was much better suited to Miss Cecile than a country parson, if he were "as good as Job." She thought, too, she would much rather lead a very gay life with Mrs. Claverhouse, than a very dull one with Mrs. Harcourt—and therefore she dreaded a meeting between lovers who had no real cause for their "fond rage."

Courtney Claverhouse was full of anger at the bare idea. It was evidently very distasteful to him that Cecile and Dudley should meet at all; but why he was so much discomposed, we, like Mabel, can only guess, and, like her, resolve

for the present to keep our surmises to ourselves, joining with her in her opinion, muttered to herself, as she saw the gay young sportsman stride hastily across the "pleasance"—"Least said, soonest mended."

Yes — Courtney Claverhouse hurried along, and so pre-occupied was he, that he did not observe that the equinoctial gales, which had been whispering among the trees all the morning, had suddenly altered their tone, and were roaring and rending them; that the clouds were gathering together in long, dark, floating robes, as if to consult what was to be done; and that, as he sped across a field adjoining the gardens of Court De Vere, the rain began to fall in a shower at first, but ere long in torrents.

Just at that moment, as he was making for a sort of low shed, at the farther corner of the field, he perceived Cecile running rapidly towards the same place of shelter. She did not see him; but hearing footsteps behind her, and fancying, perhaps, they were those of Dudley

Harcourt, urged to pursue her by some representations of Moss Rose, or seeing in her visit to the cottage, an overture her pride repudiated, she only fled the faster ; and when at length he was near enough to touch her shoulder, but too much out of breath to speak at once, she suddenly turned round, with the eye and the port of a lioness at bay, but seeing her mistake, laughed as she said, " Oh ! is it only you, Mr. Claverhouse ? Let us take shelter together."

The " only you" was not exactly agreeable to our handsome Anglo-Parisian ; but he smiled gaily, and entered the cow-shed with Cecile. Her complexion was heightened by her long run ; and as she took off, and wiped and shook her drenched and dripping hat, her thin dress, also very damp, clung, like the wetted or waxed draperies of ancient statues, to her faultless form, and while her long hair, also streaming, hung around her, Courtney thought " Sabrina fair" had never had so lovely a representative.

Of course he helped to wring and shake the



cloak and wipe the large straw hat. Of course he mourned over the saturated state of the little feet, and offered to rush back to the Court for an umbrella, a dry cloak, and goloshes ; but though Cecile only said she did not like to trouble him, he showed no real alacrity about departing, for indeed he even proposed waiting till the thunderstorm had passed, remarking that, if "Celadon" were to be struck by the lightning, it ought to be by "his Amelia's" side.

Cecile smiled abstractedly. Her thoughts were with Dudley. She had been very near him. She had heard his step—his gentle, "Mrs. Moss, can I come in?" She had been all but in his presence—she had all but breathed the same air with him. Those only who have loved can tell the potency of such approximation. Cecile was in no mood for Courtney's gallantries.

But Courtney, who had never been alone with her before for more than a few minutes, and subject to intrusion, finding himself so far

from the house, so secure from interruption, so very near to her, and she, startled by the loud thunder and vivid lightning, clinging to him unconsciously, and looking so poetically lovely the while, Courtney, overrating his own powers and the encouragement she, in her *dépit amoureux*, had given him, had thrown his arm round her, and was exclaiming, "Beautiful, beloved Cecile!" when a shadow fell upon them. A figure, also seeking shelter, stood at the entrance of the cow-shed; and Cecile De Vere and Dudley Harcourt were face to face.

Yes! he had seen her just at the moment that, unconsciously to her, Courtney had thrown his arm round her; and, though she broke from his embrace directly she was aware of it, to Dudley Harcourt it seemed that it was only *his* sudden appearance that had caused her to resist it. The words, "Beautiful, beloved Cecile! how I bless this storm!" had burst on his ear.

Just at this moment the sky grew densely black—the roar of the thunder seemed fright-

fully near—the flash of the lightning illuminated the agony of Cecile's face, the pale disdain of Dudley's, and the half-triumphant smile of Courtney's countenance.

“Come in!” faltered Cecile, her pride forsaking her at that moment, “come in, Dudley! Mr. Harcourt!”

“Miss De Vere!” he replied, turning to leave the shed, “not for one moment—not to escape instant death—can the same roof now cover you and me!”

He was gone! “Oh! heaven! the lightning will strike him!” cried Cecile, darting after him. Courtney laughed a bitter laugh, as he said, “*Sont elles inconcevables ces femmes!*” but he did not move from the shed.

Cecile has reached Dudley—she has grasped his arm. “Come back, for Heaven's sake, not mine!” she said. “Do not brave this dreadful storm.”

“What is the storm without,” he cried, “to that within?—what the lightning's flash to the

sudden conviction of your perfidy ? I had heard of this, but I scorned to believe one word against you. It seemed treason to virtue and you, and I had humbled my heart to beg your mercy. I could not say pardon, since I had not offended. Away ! do not touch me !”

“ You wrong me cruelly, oh ! believe me ! Will you not believe me, Dudley ?”

“ Not against the evidence of my own senses. I fear to trust myself to speak, lest I forget what I owe to your sex, if not to you, and tell you what you are ! Farewell for ever !”

He hurried away. Cecile sank against a tree, stunned, motionless ; and Courtney came forth and led her back to the shed. He called her by every endearing name, but she did not seem to heed or hear. He encircled her with his arms, or she would have fallen to the ground.

The storm raged with unabated violence for some minutes, and at one time they were almost in darkness ; but by degrees the elements fought it out between them, the winds were hushed,

the rain abated, the artillery of heaven moved off to a distance, and ere long a little patch of blue sky spread into a cerulean expanse, and a bright sun came out to dry the tears that hung on Nature's face.

Cecile was deadly pale, but she took the arm Courtney offered, and proceeded homeward. On her way she met Amy and Ruth with cloaks, goloshes, &c.

She answered Amy's affectionate enquiries with monosyllables; and as she entered the hall, a letter to herself met her eye, lying on the table. She seized it, rushed hastily up stairs with it; and though Amy piteously implored to be allowed to come in and help her off with her wet things, she did not remove one of them till she had read that letter through and through. She then controlled the emotion that seemed to convulse her frame, wiped away the large, fast welling tears, locked the letter in her desk, and admitted Amy.

Amy had summoned Mrs. De Vere, whose

authority her daughters never disputed. She insisted on Cecile's going at once to bed. The cook brought a warming-pan, the housemaid a foot-bath, and Amy a bason of hot whey—a "*lait de poule*," made by herself under the superintendence and by the advice of Mr. Claverhouse.

Cecile shuddered when, with a smile, Amy told her who had prescribed it, and pushed it away; but Mrs. De Vere desired her to drink it, and she complied at once. A good fire was soon kindled, the room darkened, and Cecile left to have, as all her attendants said and hoped, a good nap. She pretended to sleep, for she longed to be alone; but what chance of sleep she had, let those decide who, by their own folly and vanity, have placed themselves in a false position, and, while encouraging the attentions of a man they do not love, found themselves suddenly hurled for ever from the esteem of their hearts' idol.

Love, shame, despair, impatience of Dudley's contemptuous misconstruction, and a burning

sense of his injustice and of the impossibility of vindicating herself, tortured Cecile's heart and brain. Nor was self-reproach silent; for had she not, from a paltry pique and coquettish pride, led on the gay and audacious Courtney Claverhouse, fresh from the very land of Vanity and Flirtation, and by her smiles and sallies encouraged him to those very caresses and that embrace from the degradation of which not even death (she fears) can ever free her in Dudley Harcourt's fastidious opinion—and that, too, just as in his breast love had triumphed over a just resentment, and, having found absence only augment the anguish of his spirit, he had written to beg her to take him back to her heart, as he found he could not live any longer in exile from his Eden and his Eve.

Poor Cecile!—her pride is, indeed, humbled! Her vanity is too severely punished! As she lay, hot tears of anguish dropping unheeded over cheeks burning with shame, a gentle knock was heard, and Amy glided in. She held a



note in her hand. It came from Dudley Harcourt. She believed, for she knew nothing of what had passed, that it was to plead for a reconciliation, and that it would be welcome to her sister, whose assumed gaiety did not disguise from Amy her deep and real distress in this, her first Lover's Quarrel.

She stole in quietly; Cecile turned her face to her pillow, and pretended to sleep, and Amy laid the note on the dressing-table, and stole noiselessly away. We will lay before the reader both the letter and the note. The letter, written before Dudley Harcourt and Cecile De Vere met in the shed, ran thus:—

“Cecile!—once *my* Cecile!—I can bear this estrangement no longer! I am miserable! I cannot ask your pardon, since even now, humbled as I am by the sense of your power and my own weakness, I cannot implore your pardon, for I cannot believe that I have erred. I almost wish I had, for then I should have been

at your feet long ago. And you would have raised me to your dear, warm, woman-heart, and I should have been spared the greatest misery I have ever known, the severest struggle of my chequered life No ! I do not even now implore your pardon, but your pity. Oh, Cecile ! how has this dreary interval passed with you ? . . . I shudder when I look back upon it. I knew I loved you dearly, deeply. I did not know how wildly I worshipped you !

“But you are generous, my Cecile !—My Cecile ! Oh, may I once more call you my Cecile !—once more press your angel form to this distracted bosom—once more see you smile, and breathe the air you seem to embalm. Perhaps I *did* speak harshly—harshly to you ! and when you had been so sweetly confiding, so gentle, so bewitching—harshly to you ! whom in my inmost heart I do so doat upon, so cherish, so revere ! Oh ! if so, I am indeed to blame—and I could kneel to you for pardon, my sweet, my angel wife ! . . . For you will still be

my wife, will you not, Cecile? You will not doom me to a slow death for a hasty word? They talk of your passing gaily, in the company of another, these hours so heavy with anguish to me. I do not believe one word that could impair my entire faith in my Cecile. There is a little change for the better in my fortunes, my dearest! The death of my uncle, Dudley, enables me to make all the arrangements prudence and your dear parents require, to secure your future comfort.

“How soon will you be mine? Oh, Cecile! I dare not trust myself to think of the rapture, the ecstasy that awaits me, when you are the wife of my bosom! Send me one line to say you will take me back to your dear heart. We will not care who was most to blame; but we will never, never, never quarrel again.

“Your devoted,

“DUDLEY HARCOURT.”

Poor Dudley!—how completely love had sub-

duced him ! How perfect, when he penned that impassioned letter, was his faith in Cecile—and how entire his devotion ! She had never dreamt that he loved her with the fervour that letter betrayed. His manner, before this first quarrel, had always been calm, composed, and self possessed. He had never praised her, never revealed a tithe of the ardent devotion he felt for her. And Cecile, who had all a true woman's wish to be passionately loved, only discovered that she was so, when her own folly had wrought the ruin of her peace, and robbed her of that love which, mutual as it was, would have made the little De Vere Vicarage a second Eden.

Too late she learnt how Dudley *had* loved her, and, by her anguish at losing him, how dear he was to her. The note Amy had brought in simply said—

“Miss De Vere will perceive that Mr. Dudley Harcourt's letter was written under a delusion. He will not trust himself to express an opinion

of her conduct, nor say what he thinks of her haste to accept another, before her formal engagement with himself was broken off. Nothing but the evidence of his own senses would have convinced him that Miss De Vere could prove wanting in delicacy, in honour, and in faith. He will return all her letters, and expects she will do the same by his. He encloses the lock of hair she gave him ; and hopes, nay, prays, that she may never have cause to repent the fickleness and, indeed, heartlessness of her conduct."

Cecile did not attempt to rise or to appear that day. A terrible night was that which she passed alone with her own thoughts. LOVE is avenged now on this proud apostate—Love, of whom she had never known the fatal power and the giant strength, till his departing form flung a dark shadow over her path of life ; and her heart, crushed and bleeding, found no support, no solace in Pride, for Pride was humbled in the

dust. Oh, how she loved Dudley Harcourt now! How enchanting seemed those peaceful hours once consecrated to Duty and to him! How paltry, feverish, and unreal, the silly, guilty flirtation, for which she had lost the man of her choice, and the fair and virtuous career he had asked her to share! The next morning, early, she wrote to Dudley Harcourt. Yes, Misery triumphed over Pride, and she said—

“You wrong me, Dudley! cruelly you wrong me! And yet justice compels me to own you *seem* to have just cause for your withering contempt and haughty demands. Do not imagine that, in trying to justify myself in your eyes, I have any wish to renew our engagement or recover your affection. You have doubted, judged, and condemned me unheard, and I, humbled as I am, have still too much pride to value any sentiment of which confidence is not the basis. With your love I have done for ever. You have withdrawn it, and that under circumstances so

wounding to my delicacy, so insulting to my heart, that I would not regain it if I could. But your respect, your esteem, I cannot bear to forfeit; and, therefore, I must condescend to justify myself, for I feel that appearances sanction your verdict.

“The gentleman with whom you saw me, Mr. Courtney Claverhouse, a friend of Lord Rock-alpine's, and introduced by him, has, it is true, become very intimate with us since the last evening we spent together; and it is true that, piqued by your contemptuous indifference to our estrangement, I have tried to forget the distress of my heart by listening to his amusing conversation and flattering compliments; I own (for I wish in this, the last letter I shall ever write to you, to confess all)—I own I have tried to find solace in his admiration for the rankling wounds to my feelings, caused by your ready renunciation. But I had no *arrière pensée* in this—no design upon his heart. I forgot that what was nothing to me, might be something to him; that my



assumed pleasure in his society might encourage hopes, and that I who had no heart to bestow, might yet win his !

“ You imagine, of course, that I was walking with him, when the storm came on, and voluntarily took shelter with him in that shed. You wrong me. I was returning from a visit to Rose Moss, and, in the thickest of the storm, rushing to that shed for shelter, I met him, flying to it also.

“ I thought he liked and admired me—I had no idea he loved me, or sought my love. If I had imagined such a thing, I should have behaved very differently. I may be vain and silly, but I am not a coquette. The first, the only words of love he has ever addressed to me, you heard ; the only caress he has ever presumed to offer me, you witnessed ! Dudley ! you could not have been more shocked and startled than I was ; nor did your presence add aught to the anger and scorn of my repulse.

“ You know I love the truth, and I have

now confessed it fully, though in some respects it tells against myself. Upon my honour, as a Christian lady, I am guilty only of the folly of trying to please and liking to be admired, and pique had as much to do with that frivolous behaviour, as vanity itself.

“I have now told you all ; it makes me seem to myself very weak, but judging by what you saw, you must think me very wicked. Of my misery, my shame, and my penitence I will not speak, because I do not wish to work upon your pity to make you take back to your pure, noble heart, one unworthy of you. But I will not return those dear letters so full of all that can guide and solace my broken heart, until you have received and pondered on this confession. If you have nothing to say in reply, no comfort to offer, no pardon to grant, then I will return all—and, in any case, I aspire to nothing in future but your friendship. But oh, Dudley, could you see your once proud Cecile, writing to you on her knees, her hot tears welling up

from that broken fountain, her desolate heart  
you would still allow her to sign herself,

“Your friend,

“CECILE DE VERE.”

It was early morning when Cecile left her room, and hurried to the little chamber where Mabel worked. Mabel was just arrived—she started at the sight of Miss De Vere, in her wrapper, looking so pale, so wretched, and so tear-stained. Cecile gave her the letter, and told her to take it at once to the Vicarage, and not to wait for an answer, but merely to bring her word whether Mr. Harcourt was in and up. Mabel took the letter and departed on her errand.

Cecile then dressed herself to go down to breakfast. She felt certain that Dudley's generous heart would be touched by her confession, her humility ; but she resolved, even if he wished her to be again, all she had been to him, his beloved, his affianced, she would not agree. He had

condemned, discarded her, unheard, and she would not owe anything to his pity and her own entreaties. (Ah, Cecile! pride is not dead in your woman heart!) She felt very uncomfortable at the prospect of meeting Courtney Claverhouse after what had passed between them. She had been so engrossed by the idea of what Dudley would think, that she had said nothing to check the evident aspirations of the Anglo-Parisian, and she knew not how to meet with coldness and disdain, one whom she had hitherto always encouraged by smiles and courtesies.

When she went into the breakfast-room, she found herself alone, and dreading a *tête-à-tête* with Courtney, who generally breakfasted with them, she ran upstairs to hurry Amy down.

They entered the library together, and there they found a note from Courtney, saying the post had just brought him news, which compelled him to start for Paris at once—that he could not even allow himself the luxury of saying farewell, but that he hoped to be back in time

for the ball, and should live in hopes of being welcomed by its belles.

This note was a great relief to Cecile—but Courtney was so amusing a companion, and entered with such lively spirit into all that was going on, he had so much to say, and was so eminently sociable and companionable, that the breakfast seemed very dull without him. Mrs. De Vere was much annoyed at his sudden departure, and was terribly out of temper. Mr. De Vere was in great pain, and full of the most bitter complaints and trying exactions; all within was comfortless, and all without dreary, for a drizzling rain fell incessantly, and Cecile, who had a bad headache, left poor Amy to the thankless task of waiting on her mother, and nursing her father, and retired to her room to watch with a beating heart for the answer she expected from Dudley Harcourt. . . Alas! she expected in vain—that answer never came. . . .

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE RETRIBUTION.

IT was fortunate for Cecile at this crisis, that Pride was *not* quite uprooted in her heart ; her sufferings were terrible, but she bore them in silence.

That it was incredible to her, Dudley Harcourt could be untouched by such a letter, and take no notice whatever of her misery, her penitence, and the undying devotion that was but too apparent in all she had said. It was inhuman, ungenerous, unchristian. But no ! no ! Dudley was all goodness, all mercy and forgiveness.

Perhaps he did not believe her story—per-

haps he considered her a base coquette, suddenly unmasked — perhaps, oh ! what will not fancy suggest in such cases — perhaps, as Courtney was gone, gone on the very morning on which she wrote to him, he believed that the gay Anglo-Parisian exquisite, had forsaken his easy conquest, and that she wanted to force back on her first lover, a rejected hand and heart.

Cecile questioned Mabel, but when that damsel had answered her question as to whether Mr. Harcourt was at home, in the affirmative, Cecile felt ashamed by any further investigation, to reveal her misery to the quick intelligence of her messenger ; and Mabel, as if unwilling to appear to covet her confidence, or pry into her secret griefs, after answering her queries with evident reluctance, had hurried away to her work. But while trying on the bodice of the washed book muslin Cecile was to wear at the ball, and which she had been required to alter, this incorrigible gossip had contrived to let Cecile know, that Mr. Dudley Harcourt had



been riding out with Sir Thomas and Miss Eveline Coxe—that he had dined there the day before, and that people began to think there was something in it, and that she would make a very nice, suitable wife for the young Vicar.

Cecile's engagement had been kept secret, and therefore Mabel did not appear aware that such an one had ever existed.

Amy, who saw the agony of Cecile's heart, in her sudden and deadly pallor, told Mabel to keep such idle gossip to herself—that she was certain there was no truth in the report.

“Well, Miss,” replied Mabel, “I only tell you what I hear—it's all over the place—and everybody hopes it may be true, for she's a nice young lady, and, of course, her Par being so rich, will give her a nice little fortune, which won't come amiss to our young Vicar. Then, though she's a pretty face, and slim genteel little figure, there's nothing about her to make it a sin and a shame that *she* should be buried in the country—she wouldn't shine in London and

at Court if she were there. She's just cut out to be a quiet country clergyman's wife, and we all hope Mr. Harcourt will think so. There's no doubt about *her* opinion, Miss, for see how regular she is at the early service, and at the school ! how she visits all the poor and sick, and how often she comes out of a poor cottage, just as our young Vicar goes in. There can be no doubt about her being ready to say 'yes,' directly she's asked."

A ring at the Hall bell stopped the garrulous Mabel, and sent her down to answer the door. She came running up with a note for Cecile. Amy saw at a glance it was Dudley Harcourt's hand, and hearing her Mother call, hastened away.

Cecile, trembling in every limb, a spasm in her throat, a cold moisture on her brow, and a sudden pang at her heart, rose, left the work-room and Mabel, and hurrying with tottering steps to her own room, locked the door, and throwing herself down at the foot of her bed,

tried vainly to pray, and holding the long-expected treasure clasped to her bosom, burst into tears.

It was come at last ! This note, how slender it felt ! But yet it must contain the greatest of earthly treasures for her—Dudley's pardon, perhaps his pity ! what if he should again offer her his love, his confidence, invite her back to his heart, propose to her again to be the wife of his bosom, the partner of his life. Ah, how she should prize now, privileges she had so undervalued once ! How lightly she had regarded their first quarrel, how she had provoked, defied him. But if he ever endowed her again with the delicious power she had so misused, how she would study, how pray, how strive to deserve her happiness.

At length her tears, having somewhat relieved her overcharged heart, she rose, sank in a chair by the window, and opened the note. All colour forsook her lips and cheeks as she read, and her distended eyes glared wildly on the following lines :—

“Mr. Dudley Harcourt is surprised that Miss De Vere has not complied with his request, and returned his letters, &c., &c. He will feel obliged by her doing so at her earliest convenience.

“The Vicarage.”

A low moan of extreme pain escaped Cecile's pale lips. For one moment she felt as if consciousness was forsaking her, and the next as if reason was giving way. She re-perused this cold and cruel note, and pride suggested that she must not give way—that there was but one thing to be done, and she must do it. His letters and his lock of hair *must* be returned.

A thought flashed across her mind, and helped to nerve her. Mabel's gossip was not without foundation—he was about to propose to Eveline Coxe, and naturally wished before he did so, to destroy all evidences of the love so passionately expressed in those exquisite letters.

Cecile collected them. She would not trust herself to open one of them; she did not allow

herself one glance at the soft fair lock she had hitherto, in spite of their estrangement, always worn in a locket concealed in her bosom : with a firm hand she sealed and directed the packet, not writing one line with it. She hurried Mabel off with it in spite of the rain, and in truth Mabel seemed very willing to do her bidding. Amy was busy helping her very discontented mother to rub and foment the rheumatic limbs of her irritable and exacting father. Cecile was alone—alone indeed ! She felt as if she were alone in the world. She returned to her room, fastened her door, and threw herself again on her knees by the bed ; on the floor she saw a scrap of paper, it had dropped from the packet she had been sealing. Her heart grew sick with a vain longing, an unutterable regret, a haunting, agonising remorse. She knew it would renew her anguish to gaze again on the fond words he would never address to her again ; and yet she would read them. The paper contained a few wood violets still fragrant, the date the third of

April of that very year, and the words—"My own Cecile—I have not seen you for a whole day!—my love, it seems a whole age! But we shall meet this evening! Oh, what luxury to walk on the terrace by moonlight holding your dear hand, hearing your sweet voice, and seeing love and truth shine from those beautiful and earnest eyes. I send you some emblems of yourself, my Cecile! The first violets of the spring—take care of them, darling—and in the years to come, when the wife of my bosom is looking over the records of the long-ago, and our faithful love, we shall smile when these violets faded, but fragrant still remind us of these April days. Sweet Cecile, it will be all summer then, for you will make life a perpetual summer to your devoted—D. H.

"I shall be with you long before Mamma's tea hour."

There were the violets—there the words of passionate love—there the ghosts of the past—and there the arid, hopeless, dreary present. Con-

vulsive sobs shook Cecile's frame. She rose, opened the window, and gasped for air. The rain had ceased, the terrace was dry. She stole down stairs, threw a shawl over her head, and glided out. The air revived and refreshed her. "He never loved me as I loved him," she thought, "and now he loves another." Her tears, which had been gushing hot from her heart, ceased at the thought, and she continued to pace up and down the terrace, determining to conceal her sufferings; then Amy joined her, told her tea was ready, and kissing her tenderly, led her into the library.



## CHAPTER XVII.

## GLOOM WITHOUT AND WITHIN.

FOR two or three days, incessant rain confined Cecile and Amy to the house. All was gloom and discomfort without and within. Mrs. De Vere, although she had never very cordially approved of her daughter's engagement with the young Vicar, and although Cecile kept to herself all the details of the rupture, gathered enough by cross-examining Amy and Mabel, to make her suspect that Dudley Harcourt had taken the initiative in the final breaking-off of the match. Her natural and her maternal pride were severely wounded by this discovery. She did not pause

to consider that it was possible Cecile might feel this matter deeply enough. She was very angry, and when that was the case, she was not very just or very merciful. She said and did many things that would have sent most girls into hysterics, but only roused poor Cecile to conceal, beneath a calm and smiling exterior, the remorse and wretchedness of her heart.

Among other indiscretions caused by Mrs. De Vere's anger, was that of discussing the subject in the presence of her fiery, cracked, and bed-ridden husband. The idea that any man had dared to slight his alliance and reject his daughter, brought on poor Mr. De Vere an acute attack of gout; but not before he had, in his wife's absence, compelled Amy to bring him his desk, and forgetful of Mr. Dudley Harcourt's cloth, he had penned him a challenge, and named Claverhouse as his friend in the affair. This absurd *cartel* Mrs. De Vere wisely committed to the flames. But she expressed her opinion in Cecile's presence, that but for his "gown," under which feminine

protection he had dared to insult a daughter of the houses of De Vere and Lorraine, it would serve Dudley Harcourt right if he had been horsewhipped first, and then shot through the heart.

Cecile hated to have a word spoken against one still so dear to her, and considered that on the principle of "seeing is believing," Dudley Harcourt was fully justified in what he had done ; for had he not seen another presume to embrace her, and heard him call her "beloved?" Cecile turned very pale, and tried to say something in Dudley's favour, but her Mother would not hear her ; called her mean-spirited and degenerate, and flung out of the room slamming the door violently behind her.

The sudden departure of Courtney Claverhouse was almost as irritating to Mrs. De Vere as the secession of Dudley Harcourt. She had hoped that intimacy, by revealing all the charms and merits of her pretty Amy, and by convincing him of the fruitlessness of his attentions to her

affianced Cecile, would procure for the former a husband every way desirable, and an union with whom, was so likely to restore herself to the favour of Lord Rockalpine.

Meanwhile, the day fixed for the ball approached: gladly would Cecile have declined carrying her heavy heart and faded attire into a scene which she well knew would be crowded with the enemies her parent's pride and exclusiveness had made, and where she did not expect to meet one friendly eye or kindly smile.

Ah! with what different feelings she had expected to prepare for that ball—Dudley Harcourt did not like balls, he seldom attended them. But Cecile had exacted a promise, when they were friends, that he would escort them to this one ball, and dance the first quadrille with her. Of course, now he would not be there at all! If he were, his presence would be worse than his absence, for they should meet as strangers! Oh, dreadful thought! A few days, a fortnight ago, her head had rested on his breast,

his lips had touched her cheek, and now, if they met, it must be as strangers! . . .

Mabel's busy gossip brought news that Miss Coxe was come down, followed by her beau, Major Longbow Miles, with piles of luggage, and one pre-eminent milliner's box, almost as large as a small cottage, containing a ball dress, with the splendour and fashion of which all Oldbury was busy.

"No one has seen it, Miss, not of gentry; but Plume, Lady Coxe's maid, has told me what it's made of." Seeing that this assertion excited no curiosity, and eager to tell the news, Mabel continued, "It's the richest lemon silk ever seen, Miss, with broad white satin stripes, and seven flounces, and each flounce is embroidered with wreaths of flowers in their natural colours, and the boddice and sleeves the same, and the head-dress is of flowers too, a wreath round the brow, and similar ones hanging down to the waist. Plume says, it'll have a superb effect. Miss Coxe is come home thinner than ever, and Mrs.

Plume says, what with her new stays tightening her in, and her Eugénie crinoline sticking her out, she's quite a picture, and fit to be put under a glass case. The lacing of her boddice, Mrs. Plume says, is quite a trial ; there are forty holes, so small you can hardly see them. Oh, Miss, if you and Miss Amy had such dresses, there'd be some pleasure in dressing you. Ah, if you had a fairy godmother like Cinderella's ! — but wishing is idle work, isn't it, Miss ?”

“ It is indeed ; if it were not, my wish would be not to go to this ball.”

“ La, Miss, don't say so ! . . . You'll look better than any one.”

“ No, Mabel ; no ill-dressed people look well at balls.”

Mabel smiled.

“ Why do you smile, Mabel ?”

“ Did I smile, Miss ? I don't know why I smiled ; but I must go and take some jelly to Rose Moss's—Miss Amy is there—and I'm a

good deal behind my time." So saying, Mabel hurried away.

"Oh," thought poor Cecile, "what would I not give to avoid going to this odious ball; but the more I beg Mamma to give it up, the more resolved she is to go, and the more she insists on my going! . . . If I had a light and happy heart, I should laugh at the trial it always is, to appear among new and splendid toilettes, in a faded, old-fashioned dress; or, if I were elegantly attired, perhaps, I could pluck up a spirit to meet the occasion; but as it is, it is a terrible ordeal. We are so isolated, that none of our neighbours will think of asking us to dance, and no strangers will seek to be introduced to girls in washed muslins and cleaned gloves! . . . How cross Mamma will be to see us sitting down the whole evening—what delight to the Coxes and all the vulgarities of Oldborough! what mortification and misery I may expect tomorrow—I only hope Mr. Claverhouse will not be present to witness it. I dare say we shall



see no more of him ! Why should any one care for us, wretched, ruined family that we are ! Oh, that I could avoid going to this ball !”

It never occurred to Cecile, as we fear it would have done to most young ladies in her place, to refuse to go. She had been brought up in such habits of obedience to a proud father and imperious mother, that no daughter of the sixteenth century was more prompt and unquestioning in her obedience than Cecile ; proud as she was to all the world, her parents only excepted.

Amy returned with news that Moss Rose was a trifle better, and Mabel had as usual picked up a whole budget of gossip in the village. In the first place, Mr. Dudley Harcourt and his friend and late substitute, Mr. Mowbray, were invited to the dinner-party at Sir Thomas Coxe's, which was to precede the ball. They had been riding out with Major Miles, the dashing Miss Coxe (Georgiana), and Eveline. They had lunched

at the Vicarage, and Major Miles had visited the church and churchyard.

"There's no doubt now, Miss," said Mabel, "that it's to be a match between Miss Eveline Coxe and our Vicar."

"Why so?" asked Amy.

"He's given orders to have a conservatory and a dressing-room built as soon as possible, and Miss Eveline went with him to Oldborough to give directions, and to choose some new drawing-room furniture and carpets. Most likely they'll be at the ball together, Miss, for the whole party got off their horses at Warrant and Flimsy's, and old Joan Croak, who was in there with a clothing ticket, says she's sure she saw our Vicar fitting on white kid gloves, and that they weré all as merry and as full of joking and laughing as could be. She says there were some orange flowers on the counter, and our Vicar handed them, laughing, to Miss Eveline. Do see if he's very particular to her at the ball, Miss—everybody says they're over head and ears in love with each other."

At this moment Bridget came in with the keys, and a desire from Mrs. De Vere that Amy would make the tea at once. Mabel went down to help her, and Cecile was alone. Then, and not till then, the bitter tears of jealousy and love gushed over cheeks burning with the fever of her spirit. She threw herself on her bed in the agony of her passionate despair—her utter desolation. Is this the proud, the haughty, the inaccessible Cecile? who, that saw such agony, would smile so lightly at a “*Lover's Quarrel*,” if this is its result.

At length she heard Amy's sweet voice calling her to tea, and presently a summons from Mrs. De Vere roused all her powers of self-control. She bathed her eyes, smoothed her hair, adjusted her dress, composed her manner, took her embroidery in her hand, gathered a monthly rose that looked in at her open window, fresh with the dews of evening, and trying to smile and step lightly as of yore, Cecile repaired to her father's room, where her mother was taking her

tea and giving him his, and where she found both parents in very ill humour, prepared to lecture her on many shortcomings, and to warn her to beware with whom she danced and to whom she spoke at the morrow's ball.

Mrs. De Vere, when out of humour, was very sarcastic, and when very angry was a great orator, at least in her own opinion. She was very angry now, and had been so ever since Dudley Harcourt had broken off his engagement, and since Mr. Claverhouse had simultaneously taken French leave.

Cecile stood for half-an-hour, meekly listening to her mother's long and very bitter tirades, and to a brief occasional taunt, inuendo or sarcasm of a father tortured by gout and irritated by his wife's angry discourse.

At length Bridget, who pitied her young mistress, and who was rubbing her master's legs, seeing Cecile's deadly pallor, and tear-swollen lids, and being privileged as very old servants generally are, interposed with—"All this time,

Ma'am, poor Cecile hasn't had a drop o'tea, and looks fit to faint away !”

“Go to your tea, Cecile !” was the result spoken haughtily, and with a wave of the hand by Mrs. De Vere.

“And don't shake the room as you walk, or bang the door after you,” groaned Mr. De Vere. “I wonder where you got your violent temper !”

Poor Cecile was treading like a sylph, and opening the door as gently as possible. She made no retort, closed it noiselessly, hastened lightly down stairs, and felt a great sense of release, and comfort when Amy, leading her to the sofa, embraced her tenderly, placed a little table before her, and gave her an excellent cup of tea and some toast she had made for her.

“I ought not to be so desolate while you love me, sister !” said Cecile, laying her head on Amy's shoulder while her tears dropped hot and fast. Cecile was thinking aloud. Amy started and clasped her tighter to her bosom ; till that moment she was not aware that Cecile was

miserable, was desolate ! She fancied she was wounded, vexed, piqued ; but of grief so intense, she had not dreamt. Oh ! how she pitied the proud beautiful Cecile, so humbled now ! Oh how she loved her ! Her own tears fell, and as they dropped on Cecile's face and bosom, they recalled her to herself.

She wiped her own eyes hastily, and Amy's gently, and saying, " One who could desert, despise, condemn me thus, is not worth a tear, Amy. I will weep no more for him. Your tears, my darling sister, are tears of sympathy—they shall never flow again. Oh, what blessed comfort to be alone with you ! Amy ! Let us be all the world to each other."

" Amen !" said Amy.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THE SISTERS.

THE important day dawned at last—the day of the Oldborough ball. It was a bright, soft, sunshiny morning, an October morning, richer in beauty than the finest morning in spring—only spring is full of hope, and autumn of regret. The beautiful lime-tree avenue of Court De Vere was strewn with leaves, and the shrubberies and adjoining woods were rich in every variety of tint and foliage.

The roofs of the Vicarage, and the tower of the Church, which in summer were almost



hidden by a leafy screen, were now distinctly visible from Cecile's window.

Amy perceived this with regret, for Amy began to understand what this Lover's Quarrel had really been to Cecile. Cecile slept, although it was nearly eight o'clock, and Amy let down the curtains of her bed, and dressed noiselessly, and stole about on tip-toe. She so dreaded to wake Cecile from happy dreams to torturing and humiliating realities.

Her own toilet completed, and her fervent prayers said, she stood for some time at the window, and saw that in sober fact and in sad confirmation of Mabel's village gossip, bricklayers and masons were busy at the Vicarage, and she could discern Dudley Harcourt directing and superintending them !

She felt very angry with him, and much disappointed in his character. "He never could have really loved poor Cecile !" she thought ; both her pride in her sister, and her deep love for her, severely wounded at the thought ; "if he

had loved her as she deserved to be loved, and as, in spite of her pride and vanity, I begin to fear she loved him, could he so soon have transferred his affections, so easily have supplied her place? There is little constancy and no delicacy in such a proceeding, and Eveline Coxe, who must know of his recent engagement with Cecile, is the very reverse of what I thought her, so readily to accept one so lately the affianced husband of another!"

As she thought thus, the church bell tolled for the early morning service. Amy, who was always punctual, put on her bonnet and cloak, and hurrying along the leaf-strewn paths, and across the dewy lawn, was soon passing through the quiet churchyard, and into the House of God.

Eveline and her brother Ferdinand were at Church, and in spite of all Eveline could do, the thought would again flash across her mind that she should see Ferdinand at the ball.

In the Coxes' large and gorgeous pew might also be seen the governess and two pretty little

girls, twins of ten years old, who had appeared when Lady Coxe's then youngest child, Eveline was already eight years of age. It was Eveline's influence which had prevailed with their Governess, to attend and bring her pupils with her.

Sir Thomas disapproved of the daily service, as papistical. Lady Coxe, who often rose late, and who considered herself, and chose to be considered by others "delicate," never gave it a thought, except to grumble at the sound of the church bell, and wish it could be muffled; or to observe to her French maid, who brought in her Ladyship's chocolate as soon as that rousing bell had caused her own to ring with angry impatience, that, if Sir Thomas had a particle of feeling for her, he would use his influence, as the first man in the place, to get the bells muffled, if not the early service done away with altogether; and Finette would reply, "And a good ting' too, my Lady! I am sure it break your rest, and it kill all de old people in red cloaks; and now Miss Clare go and take

her pupils, and not help me one bit, as she did before."

And as to Miss Coxe, the dandizette, the would-be fashionable, the *esprit fort*, the belle without beauty, and the *bel esprit* without wit, she despised the old village church and the young Vicar, who could prefer Eveline's baby face and *petite* figure to her marked features and tall form. She despised the small, scanty congregation of school children and old men and women ; and as she often read French novels till dawn, she sometimes came down very late. So her going was quite out of the question.

But there was one person staying at the Hall who might have had influence with Miss Coxe to induce her to attend the early service, had he chosen to exert it ; and why he did not do so, since he had resolved on attending it himself, it would be hard to say, and he was in a general way very gallant to Georgiana Coxe. This was Major Longbow Miles, a distant connection of the Coxes—very wealthy, a bachelor, a beau,

the great family referee in all points of *etiquette*—a severe judge of the dress, beauty, and manners of the fair sex—a little given to boasting, scandal, tuft-hunting, and time-serving—but a man who could make himself very agreeable; for, like Sir John Falstaff, his good humour and high spirits were inexhaustible. He employed through life the dashing army tailor who had set off his boyish charms as an ensign; and now that the rose of his cheek was transferred to his nose, and that hair adorned not only his head but his cheeks and his chin—this same tailor still secured him, wherever he appeared, the favourable notice of the ladies, and the verdict of a gentlemanly, well-dressed fellow, from the men.

Of course it was not the tailor alone who achieved this triumph; Major Longbow Miles's hatter, hosier, glover, bootmaker, jeweller, perfumer, and hairdresser were, all in their several departments, the men and "the thing." He was very active. Cleanliness with him seemed

to rank not next to godliness, but, alas ! before it. Never did he forget his bath—no soil or crumple ever appeared on his snowy and faultless linen, and his thick chinchilla hair shone as if it had been lackered. However, it was a little thin just at the crown; but bright, black hair, streaked with grey, curled closely round it, and united, with dyed whiskers, moustachios, and *jeune France*, to make him look very martial indeed.

On the morning in question, the morning of the Oldborough ball, just after the service had commenced, Major Longbow Miles opened the door of the Coxes' pew, and soon his loud responses edified the little congregation.

Amy De Vere, as she left the church, saw him standing in the porch, somewhat pompously distributing sixpences, shillings, and half-crowns to the school children and old men and women, and asking them questions without in the least heeding their answers.

On seeing Amy, whom he had often noticed when she was a little girl, and fed with sugar

plums from his *bonbonnière*, he approached her, raised his hat gallantly, and said, "The rose has redeemed the promise of the bud. I hope the ball is to be graced to-night by the fairest of the fair! . . . . Ah! the young fellows won't sleep to-night as soundly as they did last night! How's my young Juno, Queen Cecile? My best respects to her. *A ce soir !*" and kissing his hand, he hurried after Eveline, Ferdinand, the governess, and the twins, who, escorted by Dudley Harcourt, were passing through the Vicarage garden, to inspect the improvements going on in the house.

"Alas! there can be no doubt Dudley is engaged to Eveline!" thought Amy, as she saw them arm in arm together, and blushed to detect Ferdinand watching herself, and lingering behind his party, as if summoning courage to approach her. Amy had been commanded never to speak to any of the Coxes, and she hurried away, afraid to trust her "sliding heart."



## CHAPTER XIX.

## DAUGHTERS OF EVE.

AMY hastened home. She always presided at the breakfast table, and she knew that if her father had wanted his coffee, while the keys were in her pocket, her mother would not consider her having been at church, a sufficient excuse for any delay in the appearance of the invalid's breakfast.

Mrs. De Vere did not actually oppose her daughter's attendance at the early daily service, but she only tolerated it, she never cordially liked it. "It had not been the custom of her youth," she said; "her mother was the best

Christian she had ever met with, and consequently the best woman, and she was satisfied with prayers and her Bible at home, except on Sundays, and the great fasts and festivals of the church. She saw no good in anything more, and she always grumbled when the slightest inconvenience arose from the absence of either of the girls, and now that Dudley Harcourt, who had introduced the daily service at De Vere was in such great disgrace, a very little would have tempted her to forbid her children's attendance. Only she was a just woman, although harsh, and she thought even a mother's authority did not extend to matters of conscience and religious opinion. Still Amy was always afraid she might be interfered with in a matter which was become to her one of vital importance, and she always hurried back with a nervous dread of a reprimand and a prohibition.

On this occasion there was no fear of either; Mabel, all smiles and sunshine, met her in the shrubbery, and exclaimed, "Oh, Miss! make

haste, there's such a surprise for you—such a delightful surprise, even Miss Cecile seems quite delighted.”

“What is it, Mabel? I cannot guess.”

“Oh, Miss, I mustn't tell, but it's all the doing of that dear, kind, handsome, Mr. Claverhouse, I'm sure.”

“Is Mamma pleased, Mabel?”

“I never saw Mistress so pleased before, Miss; she's so flushed, and her eyes so bright, she looks quite a picture—but I shall let it all out, I know I shall, if I stay a minute longer. It's just like a fairy tale, I declare. Cinderella's a joke to it.”

Amy began to suspect something, and even her quiet heart had its woman weakness, and beat quicker than usual. She glanced up at Cecile's window—Cecile was looking for her, smiling, certainly. She entered the house, her mother sent for her immediately. She was in her own room. A letter was open before her, and three very large French deal boxes were on

the floor ; their contents were spread on the bed and the sofa.

“ What is all this, Mamma ? Who has sent these costly, these exquisite things ? ”

“ My uncle, Lord Rockalpine. It seems Claverhouse has told him of the ball, and he has ordered of the Empress's modiste the most elegant toilettes for us, all that taste could devise or money purchase. Nothing is forgotten—head-dresses, gloves, shoes, fans, wreaths, even *mouchoirs*. Mabel has examined the dresses, and declares they are certain to fit. Did you ever see anything so exquisite ? Just look at mine ! could anything be more suitable, more becoming ! This velvet is the richest Genoa, and of a rose-colour never seen in England ; just notice the trimmings of the skirt and the jacket, the superb blonde and graceful feathers of the head-dress, the sleeves and the chemisette ! It reminds me of old times, when no girl ever took more delight in dressing her doll, than my dear, dear uncle in dressing me ; and the doll was not

more thankless," she added, wiping away a tear. "And now look at your dress and Cecile's, remark the taste of those boddices, the delicate brilliancy of the silver embroidery of those five tunics to each skirt—the milliner has forgotten nothing, even the Eugénie crinoline is there, to give the exact amount of *tournure* that is now the fashion in Paris. As for the wreaths, they are perfection; the only difference, that yours is all white, while a delicate blush in the roses adapts Cecile's better to her hair and complexion."

Amy had never had a fashionable, not even an elegant dress before—tears of delight stood in her eyes, and her cheeks were flushed with joy. The beauty of the work, so peculiarly French, delighted Mabel; the shoes, the gloves, the fans, the handkerchiefs, all seemed fitter for Eugénie herself, than for the poor De Veres!

Even Cecile, who had joined the party, seemed won for awhile from her grief and her regret, by the "woman's innocent and young delight."

"May I read this letter, Mamma?" asked Amy.

"Yes, read it aloud; it is from Mr. Claverhouse."

"DEAR MADAM,

"I am come back to Oldborough on purpose for the ball, and to bring to you and your charming daughters some ball dresses made under Lord Rockalpine's direction by the Empress's *modiste*. He has added some other trifles, which he has taken a lively pleasure in selecting, and I assure you I have been constantly called upon for advice, which taxed my memory to no small amount. Luckily, Mrs. De Vere and her daughters are not easily forgotten. Lord Rockalpine sends his kindest love to you all; he longs to behold charms and graces which I have described as best I might, and yet I fear but faintly.

"I have been commissioned to purchase for him at Houlditch's, a clarence and pair, and he

wishes that the first duty it performs, should be to convey you and the young ladies to the ball. He planned that I should drive over in it, place it at your disposal, and depend on your courtesy for a lift in it. A coachman and footman of his own will be in attendance, and I shall bring my own valet, as he may be useful. I can give you no idea of the interest and occupation this ball has given my old friend, and how he longs for my account of it.

“I am at the dear old Red Lion, (out of compliment to Amy's regard for the Heartys.) Frost's Family Hotel may thank her for my desertion. The bustle going on here is terrific. Really it is a noble ball-room. I fear old Hearty will have a fit, he looks as purple as his own port !.....I hear there is not a flower to be had for love or money, and not a pair of white kid gloves left in the town. The officers of the —— Dragoons, who have just relieved the —— Fusileers at D——, will be present. It is said that Colonel Lord Beaudesert, who



lately married the great city heiress Miss Cobb, will be there with his bride. The old Stubbses are determined to appear, in spite of Smiley and Jemima. Smiley Stubbs' get-up is said to be something fearful. The band has just arrived, Weippert himself. *A ce soir ma chère dame ! Mes hommages à Monsieur et ces demoiselles votre toute dévoué.*

“COURTNEY CLAVERHOUSE.”

“Now !” said Mrs. De Vere, in high spirits, “we shall go to this ball as people of our birth and pretensions ought to go ! For once I shall see my girls as distinguished for the superiority and elegance of their dresses, as for the beauty of their persons and the dignified grace of their manners. For once I shall feel myself again, and not have to assume more than my natural hauteur to awe the impertinence, awakened by the poverty of my vamped-up and old-fashioned attire. Hitherto I have appeared in such a guise, that any but a De Vere *née Lorraine*, would have been ridiculous and

dowdy in it ! My darlings ! How I shall delight in this ball ! How we shall enjoy it ! . . . You, Cecile, shall wear my pearl ornaments, and you, Amy, my gold ones. What diamonds I have, I shall sport myself."

The girls caught the infection of their mother's unwonted joyousness and triumph. It was almost affecting to those good, dutiful daughters to see her so elate, at what, in her youth, was an everyday occurrence, a costly dress, in the latest fashion, as a present from her uncle.

Nor was this all ; sad and sobered as was Cecile's disappointed heart, it grew lighter as she gazed on her five skirts of fairy aerophane, so richly embroidered with an arabesque pattern of dead and bright silver ; and as for Amy, who had no such load at her heart as Cecile had, (although she had her own little secret care) Amy was almost wild with delight, and anticipated triumph.

It was most wise in Providence to make Eve in her sinless state independent of dress. Alas !

what a power does it possess in the hands of the Evil-one. Goëthe felt this when he made Mephistopheles proffer to Faust a casket of jewels, as prime agents in the seduction of Marguerite; and the exultation of the arch-fiend, as she gazes enraptured on the lustre they at once borrow from and lend to the young maid's beauty, is worth a thousand homilies.

In that delicious old story, the Vicar of Wakefield, among other touches of nature that bring the simple Primrose family so vividly before us, is one to the point—where the Vicar says, “A suit of mourning would make my Olivia grave, and a set of new ribbons convert my sedate Sophia into a coquette.”

People talk of cultivating a taste for dress—absurd! it needs no cultivation: to direct and to modify it, is the duty of all who enter on the solemn task of educating young female minds; but almost every girl is born with a more than taste, with a positive passion for dress—not the pretty only, the plain and the ugly, possess it

equally. It shows itself in the little baby-girl's delight in her red shoes and blue sash. The closely-shorn head of the ugliest girl in your National school is full of it, and it evinces itself either in the attempt to deck with glass beads a sun-burnt throat, or to fasten a coarse collar with a sixpenny brooch, or failing this, in her deadly envy of some idle girl, who, having no one to care for her soul, is allowed to deck her poor frail body as gaudily as bad taste and scant means permit. Beauty, passion, affection, poverty, want, cruelty in parents, harshness in employers, and the wiles of Satan and man, all help to fill our streets, our hospitals, and our penitentiaries, with "poor, way-trodden flowers;" but altogether they do not enlist half so many recruits in the ghastly legions of sin, as does the love of dress!

Why, there are countries in Europe where women and girls will sacrifice their long hair for a pair of earrings, and sell their teeth, in spite of the pain of the process, and the life-long

inconvenience of the result, for a glittering necklace. Man's love of pleasure causes much of the domestic misery so rife in our land ; but woman's love of dress, even among the respectable and the elevated ranks of life, is quite as productive of ruin and disunion.

Cecile and Amy, for the first time, felt what had only been a quiet interest hitherto, throb like a passion in their young hearts, as they tried on, the first really beautiful, costly, and becoming dresses they had ever possessed.

It seemed like magic, and Mabel's idea of a fairy godmother was not out of place when these dresses, made in Paris, proved to fit with a perfection never approached in England. The glistening white satin shoes with their silver rosettes, the gloves, with their rich embroidery, had the same astonishing perfection.

Mabel could have explained this if she would, but Mabel was bound to secrecy. She had provided Mr. Courtney with the most exact patterns her skill enabled her to take, and with a glove

and a slipper of each of the ladies, and Mabel richly enjoyed the wonder that they were never weary of expressing.

Of this splendid triumph of her own liege ladies, as she always considered them, and of the signal defeat of all the mean and envious back-biters of Oldborough and the neighbourhood, Mabel justly considered herself the assistant architect.

“ Oh, I hope *he* will be there,” thought Cécile, as she gazed at an enchanting image of beauty, adorned in a manner that added a thousand-fold to every charm of face and figure! . . . . “ He has despised, condemned, disbelieved, rejected, scorned me! It would be a triumph to make him bitterly regret what he has so heartlessly spurned! Yes, I trust he will be there!”

Amy hoped Ferdinand would see that the little Amy, of whom he used to be so fond in her pink gingham frock and straw hat, and call his Shepherdess, in contradistinction to Cecile, whom he always named a Queen—could look almost as



queenly as her taller and more stately sister. Amy, delighted to look at every artificial dew-drop on the white roses and bright green leaves of her wreath, and was never weary of scenting the air with her large superb fan glittering with spangles, and waving with marabouts.

The idea of Lord Rockalpine's equipage and servants being at their disposal for this ball, added not a little to their comfort and delight, and the hearts of all three, warmed towards the Prince of this fairy tale—the Fortunatus, whose wishing-cap had been so magically and so kindly employed for them.

Mr. De Vere was as pleased as his wife and daughters. Pride was gratified—Vanity contented. All this he said was owing to the blood that flowed in their veins, not to any accidental conquest, 'plebeian industry, or even talent. Lord Rockalpine, though angry that his niece had refused Lord Bagshot, had never disputed the fact that Mr. De Vere's family was worthy to be allied with her own, and he felt certain that



had this not been the case, he would never have concerned himself about the girls, though their mother was a Lorraine.

He determined, to Mrs. De Vere's dismay to attend the ball himself; he longed to witness the triumph of his wife and daughters; but the excitement so increased the torture of his gout, that he was obliged instead to retire to his bed, and put himself entirely under the guidance of Bridget, and the influence of *eau médicinale*. As his hair, his eye-brows and whiskers were only beginning to sprout out, Mrs. De Vere was terrified at the idea of his appearing in public, and though she regretted the cause that prevented his going, she certainly rejoiced in the result.

While Cecile, by her mother's command, retired to her room to lie down, for she looked pale and weary in spite of her pleasing excitement about her dress, Amy resolved to slip out and pay a short visit to "Moss Rose." She thought she could not fully enjoy the ball unless she had first performed what she considered to

be a Christian duty. She found Moss Rose with a brighter eye, more roseate colour, and more hopeful voice and manner than usual, and she heard that Mr. Dudley Harcourt, Mr. Ormsby, Miss Eveline, and Mr. Ferdinand Coxe attended by Major Longbow Miles, had been paying her a visit. Moss Rose seemed disposed to talk more than Amy thought good for her, after the fatigue of receiving so many visitors. Amy felt her pulse, it was unusually quick, and her hand was hot. She *would* dilate on the misery which she felt certain was in store for Dudley and Cecile, unless they made up their "Lover's Quarrel," and she revealed more than she ever had done before to Amy, of all she had suffered from being "wrath with what she loved."

Amy told her what was reported about Dudley and Eveline Coxe; Rose shook her head and said, "I cannot believe it, Miss Amy; I am certain our dear young Vicar loves Miss Cecile more than ever. If he *is* going to marry ano-

ther, it's like poor Mark Heather, in anger and revenge, and it'll end in the misery of all parties. Oh, if I could see Miss Cecile again, I have so much to say to her."

"I will bring her to see you to-morrow, dear Rose," said Amy, "and I must hurry away now." Amy gently kissed Moss Rose's flushed cheek, and was gone.

It was rather late on a lovely autumn afternoon, as Amy hurried back to Court De Vere. There was a fair at Oldborough, in addition to the excitement the assizes always furnish in a country town. There was not a living creature of the human species to be seen—either on the angle of heath, the range of common, across the fields, or in the Lady's Wood that skirted the gardens of the Court. The sun shed, as it often does in autumn, a richer and ruddier light than in summer, and the woods were gay in every variety of tint and tone, a soft haze enveloped the distance, and not a leaf was stirring in the mild soft air.

As Amy crossed the fields, which were of that fine close grass, common in very old pastures, a number of snowy mushrooms, the growth of a few minutes, appeared to her to be studding the emerald sod.

Mr. De Vere doated on mushrooms, just as invalids always do on something perfectly indigestible. Amy knew nothing about digestion, but she had a little basket in her hand, and she resolved to fill it with these tempting buttons. Mushroom hunting is a very fascinating, time-wasting pursuit, and the rich sun was setting behind the yew trees when Amy's basket was full.

She began to fear she might have been missed, and dreaded a scolding. She hurried along, with an uncomfortable sense of the utter loneliness and hushed repose of all around. She entered the Lady's Wood—it was positively dark beneath the gnarled and interlacing boughs, and her light step disturbed the fallen leaves, startled a hare, and sent brace of pheasants aloft with

a noise that made her jump. Just at this moment, entering a path which led to the churchyard, she came suddenly upon Ferdinand Coxe, in the act of loading his gun.

Ferdinand turned very pale—Amy blushed crimson. He looked very handsome in his velvet shooting jacket and sportsman's cap, and though Amy had resolved not to speak to him, (for her parents had wished her never to exchange a word with him,) it was not in her gentle nature to spurn him from her, when, timidly approaching and holding out his hand, he said, "Oh, Amy! I was thinking of you at the very moment you appeared. I was recalling the happy hours we had spent in this dear wood, and I have found out the initials of our names, carved by ourselves! Amy, I am not changed, except that I love you more than ever; but you! why do you seem to hate me?—why never give me one little glance of recognition, one dear smile? You will drive me mad, Amy—I will not endure it, I will go abroad, and you shall

never hear when I die and where I am buried."

"Ferdinand," said Amy, "how cruel! You know I may not speak to you."

"May not! you would speak to me if you loved me, for 'Love will still be lord of all;' but you do not love me—you never did! Farewell for ever!"

Amy burst into tears.

"Amy, you weep!" cried the young lover, rushing to her, and throwing his arms around her; "you *do* love me! you wish me to stay! you do not mean to doom me to death!"

"Oh, Ferdinand!" said Amy, her head drooping on his shoulder, and her cheek burning under his kiss. "What can I do—I love you still! I must ever love you! but our parents, they never will consent."

"Time works wonders," said the young man, full of hope. "If *you* are constant, Angel of my life! Star of my path! Flower of my bosom! I will conquer all other difficulties. Let me take

a good class, and my father will not oppose me. Be you resolute, and your parents must yield. Say you will be mine, if I can manage this, and I shall be so strong in faith and hope, I must conquer even the purse pride of my race, and the family pride of thine. Swear if so you will be mine, and will never smile on another."

"I do swear it, Ferdinand; but let me go now, and let our hopes and plans be secret as this meeting!"

"I shall see you at the ball to-night, my Amy! and if I may not be your partner, I *will* be your *vis-a-vis*; and in Sir Roger De Coverley I shall touch your dear hand, and look into your violet eyes. Oh! Amy, I had loathed the idea of this ball. How I shall love it now! Drop a flower from your bouquet, that I may know you are thinking of me. Say you will."

"I will; but go now—oh! do go now!"

"One kiss!—and I will."

And Amy let him take that kiss. For the first time their lips met; and if they parted not



on the instant, who can blame them? In their pure young hearts they are affianced—and with that kiss have they sealed their troth plight.

Amy tore herself from her lover's arms—her heart fluttered and her cheek burned; but he was a man, and what was an affection in her was a passion in him. He loved her with a painful intensity. Tears glittered in his eyes, and his noble brow was damp. A feeling very like faintness came over him, when he found himself alone; and sinking on the ground, he remained for some minutes unconscious of everything but of Amy's first kiss.

Meanwhile, Amy had passed through the Lady's Wood, and had reached the stile that led into the churchyard path. She had to cross that path and the churchyard itself. It was growing dark—and Amy was very nervous and not a little superstitious. Full of thoughts of love and lovers, her eyes wandered to the grave marked by a head and a foot-stone, in which Moss Rose had so often wished she were laid

by the side of her sisters and her father. Dim in the distance and the mist, Amy descried the grave; and to her surprise she fancied she saw two figures, hand in hand, standing beside it.

They seemed to be the figures of Mark Heather and Moss Rose! . . . . Often during their courtship Amy had seen them in that attitude and on that very spot. . . . . Could Mark, then, have been discharged from prison; and if so, how rash of him to tempt Moss Rose, in her sad state, out on such an evening!—how weak and wilful of her to go! Could it indeed be they! As she gazed, Mark, whose head had been bent down, suddenly raised it, pointed to the sky, where the moon was rising, and Moss Rose did the same. Amy fancied she saw both their faces—very pale, very beautiful—a lustrous light in their eyes, and a smile on their lips. . . . . That they looked taller, larger than their wont! and crying out, “Moss Rose! Mark Heather! stop!” for they had turned to move away, hand in hand, Amy tried to approach them. The old country churchyard

was very crowded, and Amy's reverence for the Dead compelled her to pick her way. She reached the grave—they were gone. She looked round—there was no sign of them.

“ Had they melted in earth,  
Had they vanished in air?  
She saw not, she knew not—  
For nothing was there.”

Amy hastened home. She found her mother and Cecile at tea, preparatory to their toilettes. She told her strange tale. They treated it as a fancy—an optical delusion. She mentioned it to Mabel, who said nothing—but making an excuse to leave the room for a minute, she hurried off to Bridget and the cook, and related what had occurred, winding up with this remark, “I wouldn't say so to Miss Amy to spoil her pleasure at the ball; but mark my words—what she's seen are the fetches of Mark Heather and Rose Moss; and it's my opinion, from her seeing them at old Moss's grave, that before

another day's well over, we shall hear they've both been called away."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Bridget (also of the same parish): "whenever there's a death in our family, the fetch is seen in the churchyard or somewhere near!"

"And in mine, too," said the cook. "Father was seen going into the De Vere Arms, though he'd been bedridden for two year, and mother was seen at his grave, though she'd lost the use of her limbs, poor dear soul!"

"Mark my words, Rose Moss won't last long, nor Mark Heather neither. But not a word to Miss Amy."

"She don't seem to have a notion that what she's seen is these fetches! . . . . Mistress, as we all know, is town-born and bred, and being a strong-minded woman, or rather Lady, she professes to disbelieve in ghosts, fetches, and even witches, and won't so much as have them named before the young ladies. Indeed, she never would, else poor Miss Amy would have

known the nature of what she saw to-night, if only by Mark Heather and Rose Moss seeming larger than life, and disappearing she couldn't tell how. But there's Mistress's bell. Well, I *shall* be proud of our Ladies to-night. I don't believe there'll be one at the ball fit to hold a candle to them—the bell again ! I'm off ! I'll ask Mistress and the young ladies to let you see them when they're dressed.”

“ Ah,” said the cook, “ I'll warrant they'll look fit to be put under a glass case and shown at a fair.”

“ Vanity fair !” groaned Bridget, who was growing very severe on the follies of the world.

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE HEART'S MISGIVINGS.

MRS. DE VERE and her daughters were dressed and assembled in the library, where tea and coffee were prepared, when the sound of wheels was heard. A carriage stopped at the hall door, the bell rang, and the next minute Courtney Claverhouse was shaking hands with the ladies, and complimenting them, as if he had had no part in it, on the exquisite taste of their costly Parisian toilettes.

A more beautiful and dignified matron than Mrs. De Vere certainly never chaperoned two lovelier girls. Courtney, a professed connoisseur

in ladies' looks and dresses, could not detect a fault. Much as he had admired Cecile during his first visit, and great as were his expectations from the dress, which he owned he had persuaded Lord Rockalpine to select (under his guidance), even *he* was surprised at "the might, the majesty of loveliness," embodied in her person. Amy, too, looked elegantly, fascinatingly pretty. Less handsome, less *distinguée* than her taller, statelier sister, she was a perfect Psyche in form and face. Her agitating meeting with Ferdinand had slightly blanched her cheek and deepened the expression of her violet eyes. But Courtney declared that the imperial lily, Eugenie, had made pale beauties all the rage in Paris; and Mrs. De Vere trusted that the excitement of a first ball, and the heat of the room, would tinge her Amy's cheek with that soft pink, which in reality enhances the charms of every beauty, whether it be, or be not *à la mode* at Paris !

Courtney himself was dressed to perfection,



and looked very elegant and strikingly handsome. Mrs. De Vere, as he stood by Cecile, remarked, with pride and delight, what a noble couple they made, and remembered with a throb of pleasure that Cecile was free. Mrs. De Vere, attributing her uncle's liberality and kindness to Courtney's flattering report of herself and her daughters, felt her generally cold, proud heart warm towards him. She spoke to him kindly, almost affectionately—praised the delicate embroidery of his shirt—the brilliancy of his diamond studs—the chaste splendour of his waistcoat—and the aristocratic smallness of his feet and hands, set off, as they were, by Parisian *artistes*, who deserved that exalted title.

Courtney saw that Mrs. De Vere admired him sincerely, and he hoped that Cecile shared that feeling. But he could not be certain on that point. Her cheek was flushed, her eyes dazzlingly bright, her hands trembled, and her fair bosom throbbed; but whether *he* was the cause of this emotion in the generally calm and

rather reserved beauty, he, all experienced as he was in women and their ways, could not decide. A glance at the chimney glass, in which he saw his pale, perfect features, glittering eyes, black moustachios, and white teeth reflected, and in which he saw too, how charming a couple Cecile and himself formed, made him feel almost sure that matters were progressing favourably for him in her young heart.

At the delightful idea, that she would yet be his—that she was indeed “off with the old love,” and ready to be “on with the new”—his spirits rose, his eyes sparkled, his lips smiled, he sported, jested, talked, flattered—danced a polka and a waltz with Amy; for his instinct taught him, that with Cecile “familiarity” would be sure “to breed contempt;” and taking up a guitar, he sang, as he gazed on Cecile’s miniature, lying open on the mantelpiece, that plaintively sweet old song, “*Portrait charmant ! Portrait de mon Amie !*” . . . . . There was something in the touching beauty of the words

and the soft melody of the old tune that deeply affected Cecile's nature—a nature which, in spite of the flowers and straws on the surface, was full of misery in its fathomless depths. When Courtney suddenly raised his eyes from the miniature to Cecile's face, he saw that hers were full of tears. “*Portrait charmant*” was one of Dudley's songs.

Could Courtney have looked into her deep woman heart, he would not have felt so flattered and so elated as he did. The image still enshrined there, was not that of the Anglo-Parisian exquisite, so scented, so glittering, so armed at all points for lady-killing. He would not have seen those sparkling eyes—that crisp, black hair—that “nose, so delicately aquiline”—that jetty moustache and *jeune France*—that light figure, so agile, wiry, and of middle height—that modish air and foreign style and manner. He would have seen a classic head, with fair, waving hair—soft Grecian features—blue eyes, large and full of thought, rather pensive than sparkling—

a very tall and very manly form—to which the snowy drapery of a surplice, relieved by the scarlet lining of an M.A.'s hood, lent a grace and a dignity no Parisian toilette could bestow ! Yes : Cecile's eyes were fixed on Courtney, but she saw him not. It was Dudley Harcourt on whom her mind's eye gazed so passionately—for him those soft tears gathered slowly—for him that heavy sigh shook the flowers in her bosom !

Had they been alone, Courtney felt so certain they were for him, (that tear and that sigh), that he would have spoken. But Amy, who did not and who could not like him, dreaded his influence over her mother, and trembled lest Cecile, in pique or in despair, should accept a man, she did not love, to punish one whom Amy felt certain she still adored ! . . . . . Amy could not have explained why she so hated the idea of Courtney's marrying her darling sister. She could not have assigned any motive for her distrust of one so charming, so handsome, so agreeable,

and who had in so delicate a manner done them such good service with Lord Rockalpine. But yet she did both dislike and distrust the handsome, courteous lady-killer ; and, therefore, she never left Cecile's side.

Seeing there was no chance of speaking a word to Cecile in private, Courtney, with extreme amiability and consideration, begged to be allowed to pay a visit to Mr. De Vere, that he might assure him of the devoted care he should bestow on the ladies confided to him, and express his regret at his absence, and sympathy for its cause.

Mrs. De Vere was much pleased by this delicate attention, and Mr. De Vere was quite won by it. Courtney remained half-an hour in the invalid's room, saying everything he could think of to amuse and to comfort him. Flattering his foibles, tickling his vanity, intoxicating his family pride, dwelling on the beauty and dignified grace of Mrs. and the Misses De Vere, prophesying triumphs for them, and bitter disappointments

and mortifications to the Coxes of the Hall, and the upstarts of Oldborough ; and, in fact, so soothing, cheering, and exhilarating the old man, that when Mrs. De Vere ran up before setting off, to say a last good bye, and told him she thought Cecile might be Mrs. Claverhouse as soon as she chose, he replied—

“I'd rather see her Mrs. Claverhouse with six-hundred a-year, than Mrs. Harcourt with six thousand. Courtney Claverhouse is the best fellow in the world, and the most gentlemanly too. He's a well-bred, sensible, straight-forward fellow ; none of your half Papists or Latter-day Saints. His heart's in the right place ; and no wonder, he has some De Vere blood in his veins. They shall have my consent, and my blessing as soon as they like to ask for it. I hope the girl will play her cards well, and she ought to win, for she has among them, that Queen of trumps, a sensible mother !”

Mrs. De Vere was delighted to see the eccentric old sufferer “in merry pin,” in spite of the

gout, and it was with a light heart, very light compared to that which generally ached in her bosom, that Mrs. De Vere allowed Courtney Claverhouse to hand her into the elegant new Clarence, while her uncle's servants touched their hats with the deepest reverence, and the well-known arms of the Earl of Rockalpine blazoned on the panels, vividly recalled the brilliant long-ago of her ball-going days.



## CHAPTER XXI.

## DRESSING FOR THE BALL.

WHILE Mrs. De Vere and her lovely daughters are repairing, attended by their elegant Anglo-Parisian escort, (all so full, alas ! of the pomps and vanities of this wicked world) to the Old-borough ball, let us pause for a moment to enquire how others of our *dramatis personæ* have sped at their respective toilets.

We will not peep into the costly dressing-room of high-born, well-bred, and wealthy beauty, although, perhaps we may meet at our County Ball some representatives of that race—

“Born to tread the crimson carpet,  
And to breathe the perfumed air.”

But there is little to entertain the reader, where all the machinery of life is so well greased with the "oil of palms" that there can hardly be such a thing as a hitch, a halt, or an upset. When, from the well-appointed dinner, served by lamp-light, the lovely ladies—lovely in some respects—since "fine feathers," as Brisk, Smiley's tiger, said, "do make fine birds," and all of them in this sense were lovely—he added, "all but one or two, who were very handsome all but just their faces."

Such silken, stately, and calm patricians, who sail from the richly-served table with its stationary dessert, its massive plate, glittering crystal, and porcelain, "from foreign far land," its piles of tempting fruit, the golden cone and the green plumes of the ripe, fragrant, luscious pine, the amethystine and emerald clusters of the grape, the fragrant rock or water melon, and all the treasures that Pomona lavishes, in and out of season, at the shrine of Plutus! The rubied, golden, or sparkling tributes of Bacchus,

and all, fruit, wine, and every triumph of confectionary, set off and enhanced by the fragrant and graceful offerings of the redolent Flora. With the daughters of Pride and Luxury we have little to do !

They sail, as we have said, from one scene of splendour to another—lisp a few bland nothings to each other, over their mocha or souchong, and then repair to indulge in the pleasures of “ reflection,” the only kind of “ reflection ” cultivated by many of the spoiled children of Fortune and Fate.

There, the neat-handed, quick-witted French, or English lady's-maid—(thoroughly competent, as proclaimed in her advertisement)—rapidly, quietly, without fuss, hurry, or causing any pain or impatience, exchanges the rich dinner-dress for the lighter graces of ball-room costume ; clasps with light hand the hereditary jewels or the costly love-gifts round the white throat and fair round arms, wreathes in the well-brushed, neatly-parted, glossy tresses, real or artificial, and often

both, (adroitly blent) the bright ribbons, the fresh flowers, or the sparkling gems, hands the white, scented, prettily trimmed *Gants de Paris*, the embroidered, fragrant *mouchoir* with its wondrous *rivières* and costly lace, and throws over the fair form, the opera cloak or the cashmere ! It is not in such bowers the comic muse and the novelist are tempted to dwell.

There is more to amuse and detain them, where Georgiana Coxe is scolding her stolid, heavy-handed Swiss maid. (In imitation of her betters, she would have a foreign Abigail, and the staunch Sir Thomas insisting on her being a Protestant, Georgiana was obliged to close with a Swiss.)

Now the Swiss are very good, honest, quiet, pains-taking creatures ; but they are very slow, impassive, clumsy, and obtuse.

“ I shall never be ready, Gretchen ! ” almost screamed Miss Coxe, as cross Sir Thomas, who loved to annoy, knocked at her door, fussily exclaiming—

“Time’s up ! We’re off ! What a bore it is you women, with nothing else on earth to do, can never be ready in time for anything !”

“I shall never be ready ; and you are so very, very stupid, Gretchen—all your fingers *are* thumbs !”

“Ya ! Ya !” demurely answered Gretchen, who did not understand, and would have been equally unmoved if she had done so.

“Oh, you have stuck that hair-pin right into my head !”

“Ya ! Ya !”

“And now you have knocked all my hair down !” said Miss Coxe, as Gretchen, rather short and thick, and with very stumpy arms, in attempting to put over her mistress’s head and over her tall, scraggy form, the gorgeous, lemon-coloured silk—had not only knocked down the profusely braided hair—but caught some of the plaits in the hooks of the dress.

The disaster was increased and the difficulty trebled, by the fury and impatience of the irritable

dandizette. She tore her hair from the hooks, and in doing so, disordered it so much that it was necessary to remove the gorgeous mass of flowers, beads, and ribbons, and smooth and re-braid several plaits!

While this was being done—Miss Coxe grinding her teeth, biting her lips, turning scarlet (her large, hook nose especially) with repressed rage and impatience, and scarcely able to repress her tears—in burst Rosabel and Blanche, the twin pupils of Miss Clare.

“Oh! sister Georgie!” said Rose, “why, you’ll never be ready!”

“La!” cried Blanche, “how red your nose and your neck do look! I’m sure your hair is a perfect fright done that way.”

“Go down stairs, you little saucy minx!” said the irate Miss Coxe, starting at another knock at her door.

“That’s the Major!” laughed Rosabel.

“Has awful Beauty put on all her arms?” shouted the Major through the closed door.

"Bolt the door, Gretchen!" screamed Miss Coxe.

"Ya! ya!" replied Gretchen, quite misunderstanding her mistress, and flinging the door open.

Miss Coxe caught a glimpse of a smiling face and bright, red nose.

The Major, of one distorted with passion, and a nose redder than his own.

Miss Coxe screamed, and rushing from the glass, hid herself in her bed curtains. But the Major was a gentleman, and had hastily darted away.

"Oh! what fun!" cried Blanche. "I wish he'd not gone away, though. He's looking so beautiful—and he's been down to ask Miss Clare, who's been making the tea, to sew a button on his white kid glove; and oh! Georgie, I saw him kiss her hand when she gave it him back."

"And oh! Georgie!" said Rosabel, "the Major brought down a black neck-tie and a



white one, edged with lace, to ask Miss Clare which became him best; and she said the black suited his complexion best. And then," added Rose, "he went away and came again to consult her whether he should wear his blue or his diamond studs."

"And," added Rose, "you forget that Miss Clare had to decide what flower he should put in his button-hole—a white rose or a scarlet geranium. But I forgot we came with Miss Clare's compliments to ask you whether you'll have a cup of tea or coffee."

"I shall be down directly, and don't want either; but I would rather have your room than your company just now. So be off."

"Well, I'm sure there's more fun with the Major and Miss Clare than with you and Gretchen—so good bye;" and the little fairy tormentors tripped away.

"Oh! Blanche, won't Georgie look a Guy!" said Rosabel, "with that very red nose?"

"And Gretchen has made her hair such a

fright," said Blanche, "I don't think she'll get one partner! . . . . Won't she be in a rage, if she doesn't?"

"Oh! the Major must dance with Georgie once, Blanche."

"Well, if he does, that'll be all. Besides, she's as cross as two sticks."

"I'm glad I'm not like Georgie!" said one little beauty.

"So am I," tittered the other.

## CHAPTER XXII.

VANITY—VANITY—ALL IS VANITY !

IF there were tumult and rage at Miss Coxe's toilette—if Sir Thomas grumbled, and found fault with every one but Miss Clare—if Lady Coxe sneered and snarled, and the whole party set off at last “in most admired disorder,” hating each other, the ball, and all the world—things were worse still at the Stubbses.

Mr. and Mrs. Stubbs (the good old couple), it is true, were ready betimes. They were resolved to crush all hopes in Jemima and Smiley of their not going ; and they were resolved, too, not to be late.

They were sitting very comfortably after their early and very substantial "tea," taking a cosy glass or so of hot brandy and water, while Smiley was stamping with impatience in one room, and Jemima having what she called "a good cry" in another.

Poor Jemima had good cause for tears. Not only the united efforts of parlour-maid, house-maid, and cook could not make her white satin boddice meet; but cook, more zealous than skilful, had dropped several large goutts of composite candle on the gleaming satin skirt, just where it was most seen. A gauze tunic (from another dress) had to be hastily adjusted over it. That tunic had been seen before in Oldborough, and Jemima was wretched.

As for Smiley Stubbs, he had sent to London for a coat, waistcoat, &c., &c., in the very height of the last new fashion, and for a pair of *bottles vernis* with *very* high heels, and in which his foot was to look "small by degrees, and beautifully less."

These miracles of fashion were promised by an early train to C——. Seven o'clock had struck, and they were not arrived.

Brisk, Smiley's tiger, had spent the day rushing backwards and forwards between the carrier's at C—— and his master's house.

Smiley had ridden thrice himself to C——. What was to be done? He had figured so brilliantly, in his own fancy, in the new and bright garments he had ordered, that it seemed a "regular let down," in his own vulgar language, to wear any of his old "toggerly."

Twice that day had he mercilessly thrashed poor little Brisk, who at first was very seriously anxious to get the parcels in time.

But at last, (Brisk was only a poor human ill-used boy!) Brisk, his back smarting, and his heart burning within him, Brisk began to think of revenge!

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## PRACTICAL PIETY.

THERE are few beings, however mean and low, to whom revenge is inaccessible — the smallest insect is generally armed with a sting, and the more huge the giant, the greater the surface vulnerable to pain.

In social position, Brisk was an insect, Smiley a giant.

By the last train came the parcels; — one from the tailor, one from the bootmaker.

“Now I can be revenged on that cruel brute Master,” thought Brisk, as he clutched the parcels. “He won’t look nothink at the ball

in his old soot—he said as much to Miss Jemmy, and that if the things did but come in time, he'd take the shine out of that 'ere parleyvous that's so great with Miss De Vere. The heels of the new boots is to be three inches, his old ones ain't but two! . . . . . I've a good mind to hide the parcels and say they ain't come. Master must be off to the ball soon, anyhow, and I could easy make it out they didn't come till the nine o'clock train, and never could be found out no ways; that would pay him out—oh, how my back do smart—it must have some ointment put to it like it had before; and to think now I can serve him out!”

The boy sat down on a stile, and slowly the moon rose behind the old moss-grown tower of Court De Vere church, dark in the distance.

“There's the dear old church!” said the boy (Brisk was a Court De Vere boy, born and bred, and very proud of being so), “and the Sunday school close by! 'Twas only this time



last year Miss Amy called me one of her best boys ! and the Vicar, bless him, give me a Bible for good conduct, and Miss Amy marked several texts. ‘Blessed are the Meek,’ that wor one ; and ‘Forgive us our trespasses or debts, as we would be forgiven,’ wor another. Miss Amy said ‘No one as didn’t forgive wor a Christian.’ Then ain’t I a Christian if I don’t forgive Master ? . . . No, that I bean’t,” said the boy, starting up, tears in his eyes, and a hot flush on his brow. “But I will be one, and a good one too. I won’t disgrace the dear kind Vicar and Miss Amy, no, that I won’t ! so here goes !”

And, starting off at a speed greater than he would have used to win any earthly prize (but what a prize was that beaten, ill-used boy really aiming at !), Brisk darted along dark lanes, across fields, over ditches, and into the paved streets of Oldborough, and never stopped till, breathless, pale, and almost spent, he placed the parcels in the eagerly-extended hands of

Smiley Stubbs, who was watching, almost in tears.

“You are a good boy, Brisk,” said Smiley, tossing the panting boy half-a-crown.

Brisk was very glad of the half-a-crown, for his mother was ill and very poor.

But he had a richer reward than that, and Brisk went to bed very happy in spite of the red smarting and angry stripes that interlaced his poor little white back.

As for Smiley, his was not unmixed delight ; the torture of the “tight boot” was revived for him.

To get these tiny, shining treasures on at all, was a work of time and agony. And when they *were* on, what with their very high heels, narrowed soles, and diminutive toes, Brisk was well avenged, for Vanity is a cruel and remorseless task-mistress and torturer.

Several times Smiley Stubbs was tempted to get them off (if possible), but he thought of Cecile De Vere, and the boots of Courtney

Claverhouse, which he had seen at the Red Lion, while they were being cleaned ; “and he resolved,” he said to Jemima, “to grin and bear it.”

In every house of similar size and importance, similar small tragedies were being enacted — similar victims were being offered up at the shrine of Vanity.

Awkward maids were vainly trying to lace tight boddices, missing holes, and sadly soiling white silk or satin.

Frantic matrons were watching for mysterious boxes from the hairdresser, wild with impatience that they came not.

Large red hands were bursting through small white kid gloves—shoe horns were at a premium. Many a foot, like that of Cinderella's sister, was forced into the tiny, white satin, *all but just the heel*.

Every house was turned topsy-turvy—every heart was in commotion—every head was giddy. But at length lights disappeared from the win-

dows—shadows ceased to move on the walls. At almost every door was a vehicle—the quiet street was alive with carriages and horses. The old Stubbses, in a brand new, bright blue carriage, picked out with red, went off. They were the first at the Ball, and for some time alone in their glory, enjoying a gossip with the full-dressed and triumphant old Heartys—admiring all their admirable arrangements and decorations; the fluted red and white silk that covered the walls—the wreaths of dahlias and evergreens—the chalked floors and brilliant lighting up—the abundant elegant refreshments, and plentiful attendance.

They sent the carriage back for the youngsters, Jemima and Smiley, and the company, ere long, began to arrive at “The Red Lion.”

END OF VOL. I.





UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



**A** 000 130 331 2



